

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

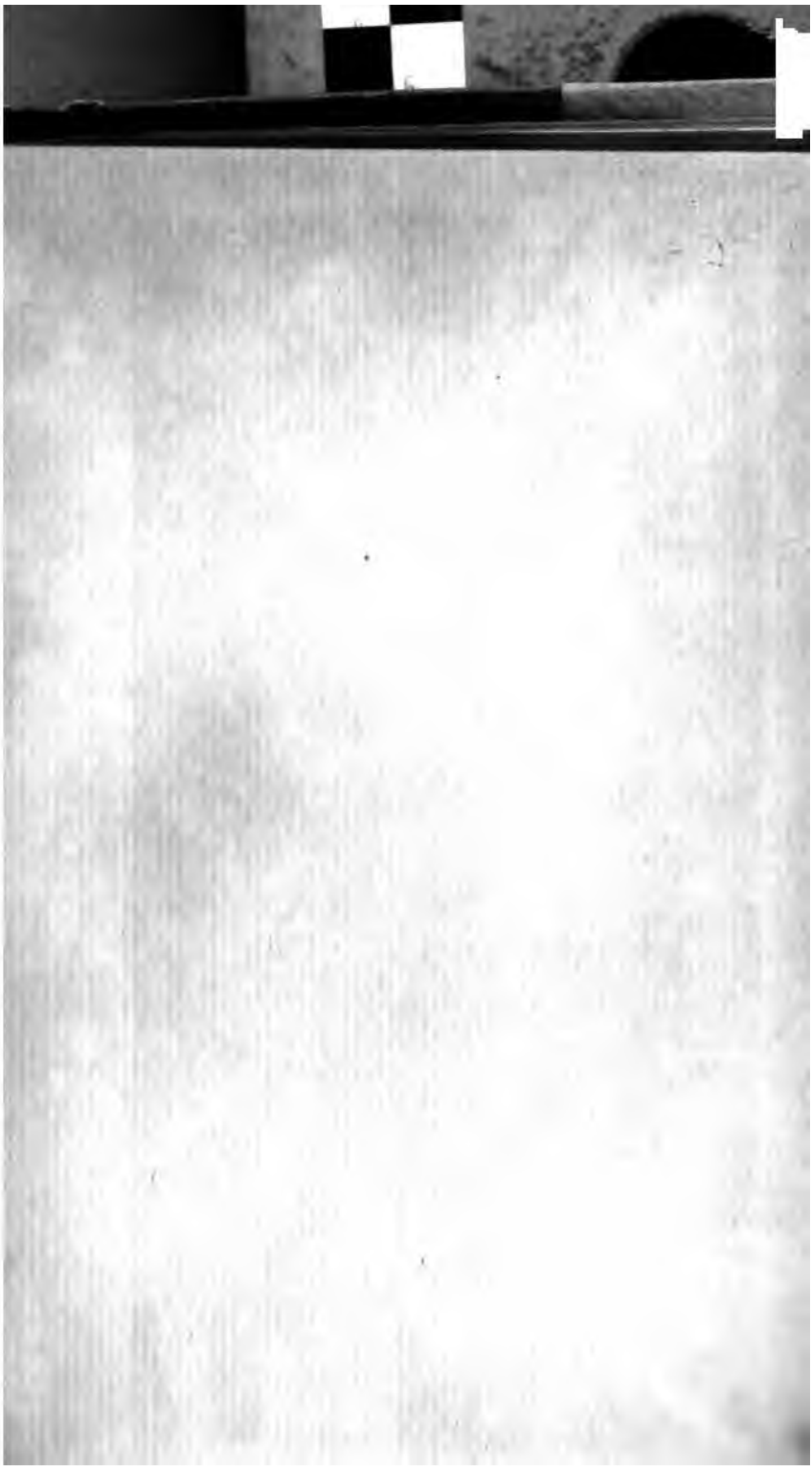
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`


·McCAW·STEVENSON·
·AND·ORR·LTD.









THE AULD MEETIN'-HOOSE GREEN.





THE AULD MEETIN'-HOOSE GREEN.

BY

ARCHIBALD M'ILROY,

Author of "When Lint was in the Bell," &c., &c.

BELFAST:
M'CAW, STEVENSON & ORR, LIMITED,
LINENHALL WORKS.
1898.



PRINTED BY
M'CAW, STEVENSON & ORR, LIMITED, BELFAST.





TO

THE MEMORY OF

MY FATHER AND MOTHER

THIS BOOK IS LOVINGLY

DEDICATED.





CONTENTS.

Chapter.		Page.
I.	By the River Banks	3
II.	The Tragedy at the Stick Brig ...	17
III.	The Innovation of the Tuning-fork...	25
IV.	The Divinity Student...	37
V.	Liza Lowry's Retirement	51
VI.	In Death they were not Divided ...	63
VII.	The Old Precentor "Crosses the Bar"	75
VIII.	"Aboot the Brig"	87
IX.	A Railway King	99
X.	Isaac Cupples's Second Wife ...	115
XI.	The Widow's Son	127
XII.	The Sextoness...	141
XIII.	Theology at the Lint Dam	155
XIV.	A Village Celebrity	169
XV.	"Scobes's" Love Story	179
XVI.	"'Twixt the Cup and the Lip" ...	193
XVII.	Odds and Ends	207
XVIII.	A Minister and a *Man*	221
XIX.	"The Black Oaks"	231
XX.	Two Little Green Graves	243
XXI.	At Jesus' Feet...	253







BY THE RIVER BANKS.







Chapter I.

BY THE RIVER BANKS.

THE river which wimples through, right under the village street, comes in useful as a means of localization and designation as well. Anyone living within half a mile of its banks, between the village and the county town, was termed a "doon-the-water man"; those dwelling on the north side were known as "up-through folk."

The terms had more significance than may, at first sight, be suspected; for "doon-the-water people," basking, as it were, in a fertile valley, occupied a very different position from the "up-through folks," whose chief characteristics were peats, moss fir, half-starved "shilties," and dwarfy, black-faced sheep. Their "fertile valley" was a profusion of whins, boulders, and single-stone dykes.

"Doon-the-water people" wore broadcloth and linen shirts on Sabbaths and fair days; the "upper folks" homespuns, slouch hats, and magenta-coloured mufflers.

The time was when this same river contributed fine sport to dozens of earnest-faced fishermen—mostly weavers and easy-minded farmers who had well-doing wives they could depend upon for seeing that the crops were saved in proper time. The professional and trade classes of the village were wont to come out on a summer's evening to spend an agreeable and healthful hour over the favourite pastime. In accordance with the perversity of most mundane things, it was generally on evenings on which no one came out that the fishes were to be seen jumping up in all directions.

Mr. M'Allister had a habit of fastening his rod firmly in the river bank, on Saturday afternoons, dropping the line into the water, and returning for captures when he had finished the committal of his sermon. Once or twice the line snapped with persistent tugging. On another occasion a plump salmon trout shot off with both rod and line, neither of the twain having been seen again in the neighbourhood.



A tramp passing along the road one day, and noticing the ingenious arrangement—a trout at one end of the line, but no fisherman at the other—walked away with the whole stock-in-trade, undoing the parts of the rod, which he tucked under his arm, putting fish and reel into his pocket for convenience.

This would have meant a second loss to the minister had not "Scobes" happened to be out for his evening stroll.

"Ye'll be gan' tae the manse, a' reckon?"

"What's that to you, old Rags-and-Bones?"

"Scobes" winced, but placed himself right in front of the stranger.

"Ye'll be takin' back the minister's rod, a'm shair; ye'r only wantin' tae ken whor' he leeves?"

"Stand back! or I'll run a knife into you!"

"Ye'r no' vera ceevil," said "Scobes," carelessly drawing the rusty hook from his belt. "Ye canna' belang tae this pert o' the country. Hae ye come far? A' wus only offerin' tae show ye the w'y tae the manse. It's jest roon' the first corner, efter ye pass the mill brig."

The tramp eyed the old man up and down, and, whether reluctant to lose his time, or,

through the country, and rather riled his friend by the matter-of-fact and unenthusiastic way he had of looking at things in general.

On visiting Niagara, and Rab viewing even it without much emotion, the cousin became exasperated.

"Where, man, could you see such another sight in this 'ere planet? Look, will you, at the millions of tons of water surging over the rocks and tumbling down in a mighty, whirling avalanche!"

"*Weel, an' what's tae hinner 't?*" was all Rab answered. (We were not in the habit of going into ecstasies over trifles.)

Numerous little "islands" dotted the surface of our river. One of these, we remember, was the cause of a long-continued strife between Hughie Boal, owning meadows on the one side of the water, and Alick M'Clarnon, holding the same position on the other.

Alick had enjoyed peaceful possession of this particular "island" for many years, as had also his father and grandfather before him, till one day Hughie viewed the distance from both sides long and critically, measured it with his rake shaft to make himself sure, and then determinedly announced his claim.



Alick, as may be supposed, resisted. The yielding of territory is not pleasant to either State or individual. A fashionably-dressed female of those days, standing in the centre of the "island," could easily have covered its whole dimensions with her crinoline; yet the contention between the neighbours became bitter and keen.

"A'll tak' the law o' ye," said Alick; "dang me, but a' wull."

"Them 'at's fand o' law 'll get their fill o't," Hughie responded.

The next year Alick cut the grass on the "island" before it was nearly ripe, on a day on which Hughie was from home.

The following summer Hughie shore and carried away the crop during the night.

Arbitration was suggested; and it was arranged that Alick should give up his claim to the "island," accepting instead a strip further down, which, though always nearer Alick's side, was connected with the mainland on Hughie's, and had, therefore, been in his possession.

The Lammas floods came early that year, sweeping off nearly an acre of good hay from each; but the calamity, though severe, was

considered small in comparison to the dispute over the question of the "island."

Youthful sympathy was altogether with Alick —let him be right or wrong—for the day was still fresh in our memories on which a dozen of us treated ourselves to a holiday from school, going to bathe in the river, leaving our clothes on Hughie's bank. We noticed the man watching us from behind a tree, but he made no move until we had finished our dip and were sunning ourselves on the warm sward preparatory to getting into our clothes, when he swooped down upon us, a riding whip in his hand. Some had enough presence of mind to gather up their clothes, plunge in, and gain the other side; others ran wildly off without their clothes; two of the smallest boys appeared quite dazed, and sat their ground. On their poor little naked backs Hughie left unmerciful red marks.

It is comforting to know that one of these victims had the courage to tell Hughie, between the screams, that he would live to pay him off for it some day, and it is still more consoling to think that he was spared to carry out his promise, although he spent the better part of ten years in Australia before the feat



was accomplished; some avowing that he came right home, so soon as he found himself with money enough, in order to do it. A promise with us was looked upon as a sacred thing.

.

There was intense excitement "up through" on the evening on which Loudie MacAlshinder (Alexander) attempted to drown himself.

Loudie had only been married some two months; but already it was known that Jinsy and he were not "gettin' on."

He had, more than once, flung himself out of the house, after a domestic misunderstanding, threatening to "dae awa' wi' himsel'"; but as yet matters had never gone further than his strolling down the street the length of Johnnie Glenn's, where he would stand for hours, propping up the gateway, and gloomily watching the traffic on the street; or slither into the smith's shop, where he would, if not too sulky, put a charge of tobacco paper in his mouth, take a hand at the quivering big shaft of the bellows, and amuse himself by staring right into the centre of the white blaze.

On this occasion matters seemed to have taken a much more serious turn. A child came running up the back street, announcing

that he had "seen Loudie up the meedas, near the 'horse hole,' wi' his coat an' hat aff, preparin' tae jump in."

Jinsy was frantic. The whole village ran, excepting the said small boy, who had been told off to acquaint the police. Jack Davison, who wore a stick leg, was in front of all.

Although Loudie had a clear ten minutes start, he did not appear to have commenced the serious business of drowning till he noticed the crowd approaching; then it was that he hurriedly flung off waistcoat and boots, and, to our horror (we were still a good way off), he plunged in!

Four people held Jinsy; the others quickened their pace. It appeared as if Loudie had missed his calculations at the last moment, and had escaped the "horse hole" after all. The place in which he was struggling did not contain more than three feet of water: his head was still high and dry.

"Oh, Loudie! Loudie! my ain man, come oot—oh, come oot!" screeched Jinsy. "Oh, nibers, let me dee alang wi' 'im! Oh, my ain Loudie! come oot, an' a'll niver vex ye mair—indeed a'll no'—nor niver say a bad word aboot ye'r mother again!"

was accomplished; some avowing that he came right home, so soon as he found himself with money enough, in order to do it. A promise with us was looked upon as a sacred thing.

.

There was intense excitement "up through" on the evening on which Loudie MacAlshinder (Alexander) attempted to drown himself.

Loudie had only been married some two months; but already it was known that Jinsy and he were not "gettin' on."

He had, more than once, flung himself out of the house, after a domestic misunderstanding, threatening to "dae awa' wi' himsel'"; but as yet matters had never gone further than his strolling down the street to the length of Johnnie Glenn's, where he would stand for hours, propping up the gateway and gloomily watching the traffic on the road, or slouching into the smith's shop, where he would, if not too sulky, put a charge of tobacco [illegible] take a hand at the [illegible] bellows, and amuse himself by blowing sparks into the centre of the wee fire.

On this [illegible] taken a [illegible] me running [illegible]



niver vex ye again! Sure ye wudna' leave me, ma ain dear man?"

.

"A'm 'feared, ye'r reverence," said "Scobes" to Mr. M'Allister, as he met him coming out from Loudie's house later on in the evening—"a'm 'feared ye hae na stuck thir couple vera weel—they'r' wantin' sinnethery [asunder] sae sune. Cud the glue no' a bin guid?"

"The glue was good, 'Scobes,'" answered the minister, "*but the timber was green.*"



THE TRAGEDY AT THE STICK BRIG.







Chapter II.

THE TRAGEDY AT THE STICK BRIG.

WHERE now stands one of the railway stations used to be the site of the Water Raw, a small terrace of houses built under the shadow of the Brig, and so close to the river that housewives could almost wash their clothes in it, standing the while under shelter of their own doorway.

Betty Downie lived alone in one of these cottages, worked in the mill, day and night, week about, coming home weary to her humble abode, where she would cook and enjoy her frugal meal, then go to bed and sleep soundly till awakened by the ringing of the bell at half-past five next morning.

On the day following an exceptionally severe night's rain, Betty hurried home from her work,

fearing that her cottage would be flooded, and anxious for the safety of her cat.

It was as she had feared. The cottages were surrounded half-way up with water. Bravely the old woman waded through the waist-high water to her door. How her heart rejoiced as she heard the cat mewing piteously. Hastily turning the key, and pushing in the upper half of the door, it was a strange sight that met her eyes. Tables and chairs lifted off their feet—even the dresser moving; and floating safely along about the middle of the kitchen was the wooden caup (dish) from which Betty ate her porridge, and seated inside it was the cat, wild with fear, but safe and dry.

.

Dick Poag, the tinker, had a rather narrow escape on a certain Sabbath in one of these same cottages. Dick was a "wee thocht odd." Like Betty, he also lived alone, and had a habit of boarding up the front of his box-bed on Saturday nights, himself inside, and lying shut out from the world till Monday morning, taking in with him two penny baps, half a pound of cheese, and a pint bottle of the "best."

The rain came down steadily all during the



night, never clearing off till Sabbath afternoon, by which time the river had risen high.

Neighbours, knowing Dick to be inside, knocked loudly at his door, but could get no response. Fearing for the man's safety, they broke in the door, and tore down the partition from the front of the bed, the noise awaking Dick out of his afternoon sleep. Dick admitted, when questioned, that he "thocht he did fin' the bed liftin' a time or twa, an' feel'd a gey cauld smell, but thocht naethin o't."

.

Would that we could forego relating another incident of the river; but life is not all comedy.

The most disastrous flood of a certain year occurred during the harvest time. The hay had not been got in, but stood—some in ricks and some in laps—in the meadows.

The rain on this occasion was not long continued, but fell, as it were, out of buckets. The river rose rapidly—rushing with terrific force through the meadows and under the arches of the Brig—laps and even ricks being carried headlong on its bosom.

During the afternoon an alarm was raised that a child had been lost at the Stick Brig—

two miles on the "up-through" side; and, alas! the news turned out to be true. She was a bonnie little girl of six summers, daughter of a working woman who was earning her daily bread in the harvest-field, leaving the younger children in charge of an elder sister. The children had been warned off the Brig, but, by some means, had found their way on again, amusing themselves and going into fits of glee as they watched the various articles—sticks, branches—sometimes tables and chairs—floating gaily on the flood.

It was the passing of an empty bird-cage which was the direct cause of the dreadful calamity. The children imagining a captive bird to be inside, leant far over the wooden structure. There was a wild scream—a plunge—the little girl with the blue frock and yellow hair disappeared in the muddy depths. The others ran wildly crying for help. When the neighbours arrived, all that could be seen was a little straw hat bound with blue ribbon, floating far, far away.

The little form was found next morning five miles down the river. It had been left high and dry on a meadow slope. The sun was shining warm and bright; cows were contentedly



browsing on the after-grass. The river, again placid, was following its winding course—cruel, cruel river!

The following afternoon a few neighbours were gathering around the cottage at the Stick Brig. The kitchen was full, the children looking out frightened from the corners. Mr. M'Allister had arrived, and was reading aloud from the 103rd Psalm.

In the little room beyond the partition a woman sat—her head on her hands—swaying to and fro in the wildness of her grief. She was only a working woman, and had no strong arm to lean upon—no sympathetic ear into which to pour her grief. On the bed was stretched the little form which had been the light of that humble home—face and hands so white, so angelic! The mother felt as though she *could not* part with her treasure.

Humphrey Barr raised the tune—it was the melancholy "Coleshill"—and slowly the people sang:

> "Such pity as a father hath
> Unto his children dear,
> Like pity shows the Lord to such
> As worship Him in fear."

And the woman wondered was it so.

The singing ended, and the minister was praying. She heard the words: "Thou who pitiest the orphan and the widow," and the floodgates of her grief broke loose.

People came into the room with quiet tread—lifted the little blossom, tucking it tenderly into its wooden house.

Slowly they moved away with their light burden. The mother arose—staggered to the door—watched them till they had turned out of the long lane and disappeared among the trees—then she was assisted back to the house, into the little room behind the partition wall, turned to the empty bed—and—and——



THE INNOVATION OF THE TUNING-FORK.







Chapter III.

THE INNOVATION OF THE TUNING-FORK.

THOUGH Humphrey Barr was removed from the precentor's box, and now worshipped with the Covenanters, it is not to be supposed that his ideas had changed with regard to the style and quality of music most befitting the house of God. On the contrary, he was more than ever convinced that his past conduct of the musical part of the service had been beyond censure. If the people were inclined to adopt new-fangled notions and irreverent ideas, so much the worse for themselves.

The time appeared to have arrived when unimpressive ballad lilts, rattled off as against time, were to take the place of solid, soul-satisfying melodies—melodies that had interpreted the wants, the joys and sorrows, the fears and

deliverances of God's people for ages past—comforted them through life, solaced them in death, and were handed down as a sacred heritage to their children and children's children.

The age was no doubt advancing; old things were giving place to new. Even now rumours were in the air regarding instruments and the introduction of hymns into the sacred service of the sanctuary. The formation of a choir was only the beginning of the end. Already a tuning-fork had been introduced: instruments would surely follow. The bell and candle were merely questions of time—long or short—in proportion to the advancement of the age. A man need not feel surprised: it had all been prophesied. He could only stand to the side and await results.

It cannot be denied that Humphrey's presence was missed by some from the precentor's box. While not concerning himself much with unimportant trifles such as time and notation, it was still evident to the most unconcerned that, in Humphrey's rugged and somewhat uncouth form, there dwelt the soul of music—which in itself is independent of fixed rules or principles.

To look at the man's face was little less than an inspiration, as he led off such favourite tunes

as "Dundee," "Bexley," "New Lydia," or "New London." With eyes fixed heavenward, body swaying to and fro, his mind was really translated from things earthly—no wonder he paid little attention to theory or time. The whole melody was polished and rounded off by innumerable grace-notes, quivers, and trills of expression, the outcome of genius. As great the difference between Shakespeare read and Shakespeare acted as between a scientifically constructed melody and the same performed by a born genius like Humphrey. Clip the wings of a lark, and he will hop along the ground like a landrail.

The day on which "Durham" was introduced will hardly be forgotten for at least half a century. George Cupples's son, a Divinity student, heard it in the city, was much impressed with its beauty, and brought it home to Humphrey one Saturday night. Though prejudiced to a great extent against anything new, Humphrey acknowledged himself completely overcome by "Durham's" "majestic, yet plaintive strains."

It did not take him long to allot to it its favourite psalm. He tried it with the 40th, the 51st, and others; but it was when he at





agen raisin' us up, even tae the very licht o' His coontenance. Na, na, there's nane o' them a' can touch at 'Bexley' for the Fifty-first."

"St. Lawrence" was one which gripped him powerfully, his soul easily detecting in its cadences a similitude to the rushing of the mighty waters.

It was, however, on the Easter Saturday night on which the student gave him a run over "Goss" that the precentor put down his foot, declining to receive more, fearing the thing to be a temptation of the Evil One.

"A' cud a bided them a', an' kep' ma heid, tae some extent, till it cam' tae 'Goss'; bit a'll jest tell ye, freens, what it is: a' didna' get through mair'n half ma wark this past week, sae much was a' carriet awa' b' that tune; an' ma conscience tells me it canna' be the whusperin' o' the Holy Speerit, whun a' budy's heid is completely filled b' a mere tune, nicht an' day; for, efter a', music b' itsel' is, tae a great extent, a human invention, an' shud aye be kep' in subservience. Yince the whurl o' a tune absorbs the min' in sic' a w'y es tae smother oo't a' else, then, a' say, the thing mun be wrang, an' a temptation o' the deevil.

"A thocht 'at the fac' o' me haen sic' a lerge

collection o' a' kinds o' tunes — Majors an' Minors, Plaintives an' Jubilants—'at a' wud a bin proof agen bin teetotally carriet awa' b' a new-comer a' at yinst; bit this 'Goss' hes hit me hard—it's a powerfu' catchy tune. Say es ye like, it's mair nor major—it's grandeeliquent.

"Wi' a' the grace b' whuch a' hae bin endowed, a' dae beleeve a' cudna' trust masel' frae bringen it intae the meetin'-hoose some Sabbath, only there's nae psalm tae fit in their present form."

Cupples was a bit of a wag, and rather preyed unmercifully on Humphrey's weakness. He informed him, after seeing for himself how the man was completely enslaved, that "Goss" was imported from Germany.

"A' jest tuk it tae be foreigin, frae the quare turns o't," said Humphrey. "The Jarmins is cleever; an', while no' jest swaathed roon wi' Popery like the French or Italians, their theology, a'm telt, is a' agee, an' they're bit puir wannerin' stars.

"There's sic' a thing as muckle learnin' sumtimes turnin' folk mad—tho' it wasna' sae in Paul's case—an' a'm 'feared the Jarmin music *is mair befittin' the Cathadrıal than the Hoose o' God.*



"Efter a', why shud we fash oor thooms wi' innovations an' importations, whun we hae sic' fine, triumphant maelodies es 'New Lydia,' 'Pembroke,' 'Oldham,' 'New Cambridge,' 'New Henly,' 'Falcon Street,' 'Derby,' 'Burnham,' an' 'Auburn'? Why, there's no' a' feelin' or fibre in the human hert 'at they'll no' interpret—aswagin' grief, augmentin' joy, an' steemulatin' repentance. Gae whor ye like, dae what ye like; atten' operas, oratorios, festivals, or what no', ye'll niver fin' onythin' at'll come hame tae the herts o' God's people like Daavid's Psalms set tae the guid auld tunes."

Competent judge and keen critic though Humphrey was, he rather over-estimated his powers when he essayed to become a composer.

They were only a couple of psalm tunes on which he tried his 'prentice hand, and the feat was accomplished by way of mental exercise when engaged at the occupation of following the plough—a pastoral employment to which the world owes, perhaps, some of its sweetest songs and most fascinating verses—the compositions of Scotland's most gifted bard.

As regarded the precentor, one would have thought that the operation of turning up the

ground would have been anything but compatible with the proper study of rhythmical science, by reason of the many and varied bodily contortions which he subjected himself to—at one time hopping in and out of the furrow with an alacrity that would have done credit to a dancing-master; now bending his head till his nose almost touched the handles, and again throwing himself back convulsively, as if he had been hit by a cannon ball. One could easily have imagined the ground to be full of rocks and boulders, while all the time it was of the loamiest and most fertile description.

Added to all these antics, which had become habitual from long usage, Humphrey kept up a continual flow of cheering epithets to the patient cattle in front of him:—"Steady, Barney"; "Win', Rosey"; "Gently thegither, ma hearties"; "Keep it up tae the en'," etc., etc. Never, surely, was musical composition pursued under more distracting auspices.

When Cupples heard the tunes rehearsed, during his visit to the precentor on the following Saturday evening, he at once came to the conclusion that they bore a suspicious resemblance to a mix-up of two or three of Humphrey's favourites, though there was undoubted clever-



ness displayed in the matter of transposition and arrangement. The student praised the initial effort mightily, congratulated Humphrey on his having entered the composers' ranks, and named the tunes "Palatine" and "Aventine"—names which the precentor considered most suitable, and with a distinctly sacred ring about them. Altogether, the old man was remarkably well pleased.

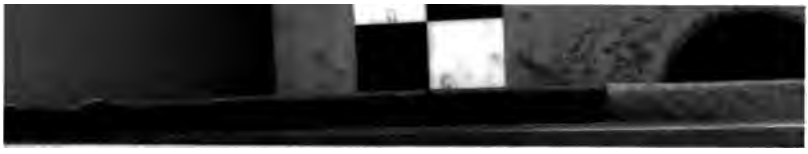
"The tunes seem to be not at all bad, Humphrey," said Mr. M'Allister, on the occasion of his having been treated to a private rehearsal, "and have quite a familiar tone about them; but could you not have found names for them within the pale of orthodoxy, without calling them after two of the seven hills of Rome?"

"*The hills o' Rome? !!!* Did a' hear ye richt, ye'r rev'rence?—oh, that rascal Cupples! bit, maybe a'll no' be even wi' 'im yit."

This was the last that was ever heard of Humphrey's new tunes.







THE DIVINITY STUDENT.





Chapter IV.

THE DIVINITY STUDENT.

IT was not exactly Johnnie Cupples's first sermon that he preached on the Sabbath on which he occupied the pulpit for Mr. M'Allister.

He had made one or two more or less successful attempts before in different places, although his college course was not yet completed.

It goes without saying that one of the most trying ordeals in a young preacher's life is endured on the day on which he stands up in his old minister's pulpit, and "holds forth" before his neighbours and friends.

At such times both minister and people are, of course, indulgent: the former anxious to encourage a beginner; the latter proud to think that one of their number has so far advanced in learning as to be able to take charge of a pulpit.

Deep-rooted is the ambition in the heart of an Ulster Scot to dedicate at least one son to the sacred ministry; and the day on which that son preaches his first sermon from his native pulpit is an all-important one—not only to his parents and other relatives, but to the whole neighbourhood as well.

On this memorable occasion, even Humphrey Barr had so far overcome his scruples as to be present once more in the meeting-house in which he had formerly held office; though nothing short of kindly interest in his young friend could have induced him to humble himself so far.

On the whole it was, perhaps, for the best that Humphrey was amongst the worshippers; for after the experiences of that day, the odds between him and his young friend were considerably lessened.

It was quite apparent to all that the young preacher was nervous. We knew it from the very first, when he gave out the 119th Psalm without stipulating how much of it was to be sung.

The opening prayer was wonderfully good and comprehensive, although he pronounced the benediction at the end of it from force of



habit; and the special supplication for the Queen and other members of the Royal Family —naming them in order—caused the older members of the congregation to gravely shake their heads, the innovation containing a distinct smack of Ritualism which was far from pleasing.

It was due to extreme nervousness that he prayed that we might be enabled to "shuffle off this mortal coil," and also that "our thoughts might be elevated from things of sense to things of non-sense."

As a beginner, Johnnie would have been wiser to have foregone the repeating of the Lord's Prayer immediately before the commencement of the sermon. He might have known that he would certainly have stuck at that—always a severe test, even to those experienced. As it was, he came to a full stop after the first petition, but with commendable tact bridged over the gap by at once opening the Bible and announcing his text.

The subject was Moses; and, once started to preach, Johnnie appeared as if he had got his pulpit legs under him, proceeding to give what might have been called a flowery introduction. There was, too, an amount of originality about

the discourse which augured not badly for the future—a good deal that was out of the common rut.

As in the exposition of the second chapter read—Johnnie, by the way, had been so imprudent as to call it "Lesson"—he spoke of "Professor" Gamaliel, and of Paul as a "graduate in rhetoric and jurisprudence"; so in the opening clauses of the sermon he referred to Moses as the "Governor-General," and to Aaron as "second in command."

Proceeding, Johnnie drew a graphic picture of the Princess Thermutis, daughter of Pharaoh, "looking out through the lattice of her bathing-house on the banks of the Nile at a curious boat which was floating in the river, without the aid of either oar or helm, and with but one passenger—a baby boy; but," said Johnnie, for the first time venturing to extend his right arm, "even the *Mayflower* that bore the Pilgrim Fathers to America carried not so precious a load."

That he had made himself thoroughly up in the details of the subject there was ample proof; for he quoted from Pliny, Herodotus, and Theophrastus, to show that the tiny craft was composed of papyrus leaves stretched on willow, and made water-tight by bitumen.



Miriam, incognito, watching her chance to get the mother Jochebed installed as nurse, was fittingly described, and this part was closed by a glowing tribute of praise to Miriam—"Miriam, the true, the faithful, brilliant, and strategic sister."

Josephus was referred to in order to set forth how comely Moses had been as a child—people stopping on the road to look at him, and workmen leaving their work to gaze at his beauty—"The child that grew to be the Lawyer, Statesman, Politician, Legislator, Organiser, Conqueror, Deliverer."

We were, by this time, thoroughly aroused and interested—carried away, in fact, by the preacher's eloquence. It was impossible to sleep under such a man, and many heads were turned in the direction of George Cupples's pew to see the effect the sermon was making on the parents.

George betrayed little emotion, but the mother's chin was slightly elevated. It was quite evident that the self-denying woman considered herself, from that time forth, rather above the common herd.

Johnnie gave ample evidence of having made good use of his time at college; and certainly

George Cupples's hard-earned money had not been spent for naught—judging by the amount of knowledge the young student had got crammed into the narrow compass of his brain. He carried us from ancient mythology to mediæval art and modern literature—then back again to Plutarch's lives, and the earliest history of the Greeks and Romans.

Poetry, too, was much in evidence, from Homer to Chaucer, and from Chaucer on to Jonson and Goldsmith (Johnnie had the good sense not to name Shakespeare). The second head was brought to a close by the quotation of a lengthy passage from the "Holy Grail."

Attention was riveted, as the preacher proceeded to describe the closing scenes in the great Law-giver's life. Humphrey Barr was leaning forward in open-mouthed attention. Jamie Miskimmon had turned his best ear to the pulpit, trumpeting it with his hand so that he might not miss a single word, as the valley of Esdrælon was pictured, in which is to be fought the final battle of the nations—"with yonder the mountains of Hermon and Lebanon and Gerizim, and the hills of Judæa. The village of Bethlehem, too, was mentioned as well as Jericho, and the vast stretch of land-



scape that almost took the old Law-giver's breath away as he looked at it."

Nebo's lonely mountain was described, on the summit of which "the Law-giver was lifted in the Almighty's arms, carried to a mysterious cavern—one stroke of the Divine hand smoothing the features into an everlasting calm."

A few verses, feelingly rendered from Mrs. Alexander's immortal poem, brought the sermon to a fitting close.

If the sermon, and especially the latter part of it, had a fault at all, it was that we were let down rather too suddenly at the end. Mr. M'Allister, during the last forty-five minutes of *his* discourse, went gradually from "in conclusion" to "lastly," and then "finally"; at which time he would close the book, lean over the pulpit, and gently bring the sermon to an end by a solemn application, delivered in quite a conversational tone of voice, thus giving the people time to rouse themselves up and have their halfpence in readiness for the collection-box. Johnnie closed the Bible simultaneously with the utterance of his last word, which had rather a startling effect on the congregation, as well as causing no little flutter—one or two

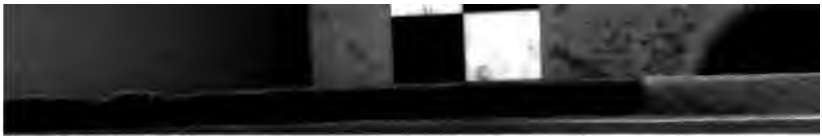
worshippers in the front seats being obliged to contribute pennies in the hurry.

Save for this trifling error of judgment, there was little but praise for both sermon and preacher. There was much congratulation and shaking of hands of father and son (the mother kept herself just a shade reserved), and many expressions interchanged, such as: "Wusn't it wunnerfu'?" "A' declare a' dinna ken whun a' hard onythin' better explained." "He's cliver, a' can tell ye, an's no' a bit 'feared tae let oot 'is voice." "George, man, ye hae every raison tae be prood o' ye'r sin [son] the day."

So much pleased were the people that even the little conceits and innovations were scarcely touched upon, but were allowed to pass as if they had not occurred.

"A' like't 'is anooncements best o' a'," said Johnnie Glenn; "he spok' them oot sae clear an' plain: an' hoo' aften hae we hard even a guid preacher spoil the hale effeck o' his discoorse b' the w'y in which he mummel't through the anooncements?"

[As this passage may not be clear to everyone, it is, perhaps, only right to explain that in country congregations no small curiosity was displayed regarding the announcements, which



were made immediately after the collection, and before the closing psalm was given out. A minister who repeated these in a hurried or slipshod manner, so that they could not be distinctly heard in every part of the building, was never wholly popular — no matter how exemplary he might be in all other respects.]

That the evening performance did not tend to maintain the young preacher's reputation of the morning is sad to relate; though, in justice to Johnnie, it must be stated that the fault was not altogether his own.

A second sermon had not been arranged for —Mr. M'Allister having only the one service; but the minister of the Second Congregation, feeling sure of Johnnie, and also anxious to give his people a chance of hearing their townsman, had accepted an engagement at a neighbouring church in the country, and the engagement could not well be cancelled.

The situation was awkward in the extreme, Johnnie having but the one sermon.

He might have taken the country engagement, which would have kept matters straight; but there was the ceremony of Baptism to be administered, which he, not being ordained, could not have undertaken.

On the whole, Johnnie made not a bad move when he essayed to deliver, in default of a sermon of his own, one of Mr. Spurgeon's, which he happened to have at hand.

The mistake he made, and that which led to his downfall, was the neglecting to deliver the sermon as a borrowed article; explain the situation in a manly, straightforward fashion, and place himself in the people's hands.

It is hardly necessary to remark that the sermon was good—whenever did Spurgeon produce a weak discourse?—but when Johnnie reminded the people of "the many years he had ministered to them," or of the "thousands of eager faces turned to his from Sabbath to Sabbath, which were the joy of his life and the reward of his work," little wonder the congregation looked at each other in blank amazement.

Many of the older heads from among the Seceders, who had overcome their scruples so far as to attend at the meeting-house of the Second Congregation—purely in compliment to Johnnie—were able to recognise the authorship of the discourse, especially from its highly evangelical tone; which, it may be imagined, was rather distasteful to them.



Altogether it was a most humiliating performance; even Johnnie himself could feel that he was falling from his pedestal, and sinking lower and lower in the estimation of those amongst whom he had been brought up, and whose good opinion he was most anxious to secure.

It was a vast relief to both preacher and people when the reading of the sermon ended. The vanquished Johnnie, hot and exhausted, was mentally considering the propriety of enrolling his name for service in the foreign mission field.

The congregation dispersed—not joyous and jubilant this time, but each man afraid to look his neighbour in the face, and all, with one accord, avoiding George Cupples and his wife.

Humphrey Barr, though sad at heart as any, was the only man who ventured to take Cupples to task; and the few words which passed between them clearly proved that however much defeated Johnnie might be, his ready wit would be the last thing to fail him.

"What was the meanin' o' it a', man?" said Humphrey; "an' hoo dis it come 'at ye spok' es if ye hed bin a reg'lar placed man ower a

lerge congregation? Thir mun be some explanation o' it."

"It belongs to what's called *hyperbole*, Humphrey," said Cupples; "but you'll have to get smaller change for that."



LIZA LOWRY'S RETIREMENT.





Chapter V.

LIZA LOWRY'S RETIREMENT.

LIZA LOWRY, at the age of sixty-five, was beginning to find her back a "wee thocht troublesome," and to know what it was to have occasional visitations of the "rheumatics." Liza had worked hard in the mill for over forty years, but now that she had buried her mother and the sister who had always been donsy (delicate), she began to consider if she might not "ease aff awee"—in other words, retire from the active duties of the mill.

There was just one thing perplexing her, and she thought she would have to take "Fractions" into her confidence regarding it. Her savings amounted to exactly twenty-five pounds; and the question arose, was this a sufficient sum on which to retire? Could it be so manipulated as to spread itself over, say,

eight or ten further years of life? No doubt the old woman would have had more than double that amount, had it not been so ordered that both mother and sister had proved a severe drain on her resources during their lifetime—the mother, in particular, having been an invalid for many, many years.

Nothing pleased "Fractions" better than the seeking of his advice on questions requiring calculation or technical adjustment. "It was surprising," we used to say, "how soon the master could come at a thing." "He cud rattle aff a calculation on his tongue faster nor onybody else wi' a bit pencil an' a slate."

"An' if it was a roon'aboot jab—like takin' the demensions o' a fiel'—why, it was jest twa-three letters an' figures an' whurligigs wi' a bit chalk on the face o' a dor', an' he had it as pat as ye like."

"Algeebra," he once said to Johnnie Glenn, "it was by whuch he worked oot puzzlers, an' a' that was connecket wi' matha-matics; bit Johnnie tal' 'im he wasna' acquaint' wi' ony o' the 'maticks' femily."

"It's a simple question this, Liza," was what "Fractions" said when the woman stated her case.



"Suppose you draw ten shillings a week, the money 'll last ye the big en' o' a year——"

"But, ten shillings, sir! Whaiver wud think o' that? A'm no' bewutched. A' dinna think o' gan' intae a twa-story hoose, an' keepin' a servan'."

"Weel, say five shillings——"

"Say half-a-croon. There's only masel' tae keep. The rent's but ninepence a week. The bit an' sup it tak's for me's no' big. A' haena' been brocht up tae luxuries—whuch is jest es weel, as it happens.

"Forby, a'll no' need much whun a' dee. The grun's bocht an' pied for. There's still ma fether's grave 'at hesna' been appined for twunty-five year; an' a' at's required tae lay me oot hes been made an' ready lang ago—even the cooffin's lyin' safe an' soun' unner the bed. A' bocht the hale three wi' the owertime money a' earn't that year the mill wus sae thrang—the year the French focht the Prooshuns.

"O' course, the metter needs tae be conseedered: an' a' thocht a' cudna' dae better nor ask ye'r advice. If the money didna' last oot, an' a' had tae go on the Perish—nane o' my forbears had iver tae dae that—or the puir-hoose"—Liza's voice was getting uncertain—

"a' hae tried tae dae ma duty . . . them 'at's awa' . . . sometimes hard an' sair——"

"Weel, Liza, there's jest two ways of it"—(that was the best of consulting "Fractions"—he found a way out of a difficulty so quickly: if he could not get out by the front door he would try the back; if both were closed against him, he would come out by a window; but out he would be)—"there's jest two ways o' lookin' at it, Liza. The money 'll dae tae till it's done—that's the one: it 'll last a heap longer by addin' a little tae it as ye go alang—that's the ither."

.

Liza Lowry had once been young, like other people. She had even found some to appreciate her; and, according to those who had opportunities of knowing, she need not have been, had she so desired it, the friendless, pinched, lonely old woman she now found herself.

There was one person in particular—Sam Bailie—who even yet managed to pay her a visit at some time during every day, enjoy a puff of the pipe in her company, and a chat over the affairs of the village and the world in general.

Sam was a cooper by trade—"the wee cooper," he was called, on account of his diminutive stature—but in his young days he had, as he



said, "ta'en a han' at maist things," and about the time at which he and Liza grew friendly, he was driving for Johnnie Glenn's father.

Liza in those days was a big, buxom, rosy-cheeked, light-hearted, merry girl. Sam often passed her on his car, while she was on her way to or from the mill, and the usual salutation between them would be:

"Hoo er' ye, 'Wee' Liza?"

"Bravely, 'Big' Sam. Hoo er' ye yersel'?"

The humour of this was so overpowering that Sam would lean back on his seat and guffaw; while Liza's face would turn scarlet, as she covered her mouth with the corner of her shawl.

At times "Big" Sam, if his car happened to be empty, would give "Wee" Liza a "lift"; at other times, if he were in no particular hurry, he would allow his horse to "tak' his breath," and chat to the girl as they went along.

A polite man would have dismounted from his vehicle and walked by his adorèd's side; but Sam's way was to stretch himself, face downwards, across the well of the car—emphasizing his remarks by occasional little cuts with his whip at the hedge, or a stray thistle growing on the bank. Sometimes these cuts came dangerously near to "Wee" Liza's bare ankles.

If the fun and folly happened to be very good, and no one in sight, Sam might, by a time, give the girl a little poke with the butt end of his whip under the chin; but that was only on very rare occasions.

Sam never thought of asking Liza out for a walk of an evening, nor did he ever come directly to see her; but he would stroll down the street, the length of her house, with one or two companions; and perhaps they would stand chatting opposite her door for three or four hours, or sit down for a rest on the window-sill. Occasionally, Liza might come to the door, lean her bare arms on the under half, and chat for a few minutes or pass a joke; but as often as not she never appeared at all: and yet, it may be surmised, she was conscious that Sam was about. On a chance evening that he did not come—having been despatched, perhaps, to a distance with a traveller—it was noticed by neighbours that Liza was a good deal more about the door, watching the passers-by, and keeping a keen look out up and down the street.

It was a great habit among the young men of the village, this going in companies to quarters where they had an acknowledged softness.



There was a flavour of independence about the plan; and, besides, it must have been considered the safer course. A man might be led on to make a fool of himself when alone with his beloved, but he did not run the same risk while in company. Another habit they had, when at last arrived at the point of making a direct proposal to a girl—they did it in a half-fun-half-earnest fashion, no matter how swiftly the heart might beat under the tobacco box in the upper waistcoat pocket—so that if met with a firm, decided refusal, they could retort that they had "only been jesting." If the refusal, or acceptance, came to them in the same manner, the fun might be carried on for half an hour.

The "twa-three words" between "Big" Sam and "Wee" Liza began in this approved-of half-jocular fashion, but ended in serious, sober earnest.

The time was half-past five on a lovely June morning. The birds were singing joyously; all insect life humming blithely and working vigorously, in order to have the labour over before the heat of the day.

The cattle were actively engaged cropping the sweet dew-bespangled grass, before the noonday heat would drive them to seek the

cooling water of the river, under the shade of the big trees. A few day labourers were slowly wending their way along the road, their scythes swung over their shoulders. The mill bell was ringing, to gather in the workers for the day, and let off those who had been wearily toiling during the night-shift.

Sam Bailie had been on a special journey to the city with an energetic traveller, who could not feel content to waste a night in the village —although Mr. Glenn's accommodation was by no means bad.

Liza had been on the night-shift, and was somewhat wearily making her way homewards.

Lovers' meetings took place, for the most part, on the Mill Lane; but this one was on the country road, between the turn at which Mr. M'Allister's manse came in sight and the smith's shop at the entrance to the village.

It may be thought that Sam would have invited the weary girl on to his car; but he didn't. Instead, he, for a wonder, jumped down and walked by her side, whip in hand, with which he gave an occasional thistle a sharp smack.

"It's weary work this, Liza."

"It's a' that, Sam; but what er' folk tae dae."



"A' hae it hard masel', at times, Liza; mony a time gettin' less nor ma shair o' baith meat an' sleep."

"A' dinna doot it, Sam; but ye'r a man."

"Ay, a'm a man, Liza, an' you're but a wumman; an' a' wush a' know'd hoo a' cud help ye."

"A'm no' compleenin', Sam—a'm no' wor' nor ithers. The auld wummin's gettin' a bit frail, an' Barbara keeps donsy; but isn't it weel they hae me, an' 'at a'm able tae keep at the work?"

"Could—wud—wud—wull ye alloo me tae help ye, Liza?"

They were now coming round the last turn, from which the smith's shop could be seen, and not much time to be lost.

"What dae ye mean, Sam?"

"Wud ye . . . cud ye think o' merrien' a fella, 'Wee' Liza? It's a' oot noo."

"No, Sam, a' cud not."

"But why, Liza; a'm sure a——"

"Say nae mair, Sam, the folk 'll be lauchin' at us; gang hame, like a man, an' go tae bed—ye'r half asleep, an' no' at yersel'."

"No, Liza, a' wull not."

They were by this time within a stone throw of the smith's shop. Sam, now that a beginning

had been made, was as bold as a lion, and stood across the path, right in front of the girl; the horse crept slowly on by himself.

"A'll no' budge an inch or let ye pass, Liza, till ye at least tell me this much—is't because ye dinna like me, or on acoont o' some ither boy 'at ye'll no' tak' me?"

"Hoo daur ye ask me that question, Sam Bailie? Stan' tae the yin side, an' let me pass. If ye tuk ma life a' wadna' answer ye that!"

The girl's cheeks were burning, and her eyes blazing with anger.

"Big" Sam thought it better to say no more.



IN DEATH THEY WERE NOT DIVIDED.





Chapter VI.

IN DEATH THEY WERE NOT DIVIDED.

HAD Sam taken the wiser course, he might have saved himself a lot of sorrow and heartburning, and Liza as well; but, what he did was to allow the devil of jealousy to get possession of his heart, that but a short time before had been the seat of a pure and sacred passion. How often through all the ages has the Serpent thus entered the garden!

Sam was jealous, and pettish, and unreasonable. Liza had been fooling him—had used him for her own purpose—had made him a laughing-stock to the whole neighbourhood, while all the time she had another lover somewhere—he did not take time to inquire where—who had captured her heart.

There is no knowing to what length Sam's injured feelings might have carried him, had it

not been for the intervention of a certain man who happened to glean a few scraps of information from Mrs. Lowry, while calling one day to light his pipe. "Scobes" (he was the man) was in the habit, at least once every day, of dropping his hand over Mrs. Lowry's door, sliding the bar, and letting himself in. At times, if not in a conversational mood, he would do no more than say "Fine mornin', mistress," to the figure in the bed, lift a cinder from the fire with his finger and thumb—fire-irons were not so commonly used in those days—place it on the bowl of his pipe, give one or two vigorous smacks, and take his departure.

On this particular morning the old man pulled a stool close to the fire and sat down, leaning his body well over the blaze, his head close to the chimney "lug."

An odd picture did the inmates of the cottage present at that moment. "Scobes," seated on the low stool, his loose swag of a coat touching the ground; the long, white matted hair, beard and eyebrows, almost completely concealing his features—the whole thrown into relief by the great, gaping, black chimney "lug."

Behind the blue-and-white checked curtains of the bed peered the face—or rather a small

portion of the face—of the old woman; for the greater part of it was hidden by the flannel petticoat rolled round her head. Close to the little window sat the "donsy" daughter, "floorin'" frame in hand, plying her needle industriously.

"A' hear Sammie Bailie's goen' awa'," said "Scobes," once his pipe was well set agoing.

"Ay, Sammie's goen' awa'," came in wailing tones from the bed; "an' there's ithers 'at micht as weel be gan' alang wi' 'im."

"D'ye mean ye'r ain Liza?"

"Ay, jist ma ain Liza, an' naebody else. The twa hae huff't at ither some w'y: an' tho' the lass disna' say much, a' can easy see she is jest breckin' her hert.

"She comes an' goes—week in, week oot—works hard, Guid kens; thinkin' naethin' o' sittin' up a' nicht, washin' an' sterchin', an' bakin' an' dernin'—an' a' 'at Barbara an' me may be left comfortable whun she's awa' at the mill; bit at the same time, as a' say, her hert's brok', an' it's a' aboot Sammie Bailie.

"It's hard on uz. We feel es if we wur leevin' ower lang: an' yit a budy canna' dee till their time comes.

"A mair dutifu', thochtfu' lass cudna' be foun' onywhor. Since her puir fether's daith, she has

been fether an' brither an' a' tae uz twa, an'—an'—it jest brecks oor herts tae—be stannin' in the w'y—between 'er an'—the boy 'at 'er hert's set on, an' keepin' 'er frae gettin' 'er chance, like ither folk.

"She'll tak' nae advice or cooncil frae me. A' tell 'er—'Tak' ye'r boy if ye want 'im, an' he wants you. Ye can bring 'im hame here, if ye'll no' go hame tae him. It'll no' be lang 'at we twa helpless craturs 'll bother ye'; bit she jest gees a bit lauch, an' says:

"'Deed, mother, a' hae nae sic graw for gettin' merrit': if ye wud only let me alane. A' think a'm weel enough merrit' tae you twa; an' a' dinna' ken 'at there's ony yin 'at a' wud prefer tae ye, muckle as a' hae tae thole sometimes.

"'Feth, he wud be a hardy chiel 'at wud hae the pluck tae come in amang us. A' think aboot a week wud dae 'im, till he wud be wushin' hissel' awa' again.

"'Ye'r ie talkin' aboot merryen' an' merryen', mother,' she'll say: 'hoo wud ye like tae face anither bit man yersel'? an' then a' wud be free.'

"That's the w'y she talks; bit theer's a guid dale ahin' it a'. Folk's no' blin'. They say there's nae folk sae blin' as them 'at dinna' want tae see."



"*Sammie Bailie deserves tae be weel whupp't*," was what "Scobes" observed; "an' if he disna' behave hissel', he'll get it."

"Och! the young 'll be young, 'Scobes'; an' they fin' it hard tae mak' allooances for the aul'. They'll claw aul' croons themsel's sune eneugh."

"A'm goen'," said the old man, rising with some difficulty.

"Is't dry or wat?"—this by way of covering, to some extent, "Scobes'" slow departure.

"It's clearin' like, aboot the wa' heids" (horizon was a foreign kind o' word, and hard to pronounce).

"Big" Sam was washing his car by the river-side, below the smith's shop, and blowing and burring in exactly the same fashion as when rubbing down his horses, when "Scobes" came up to him.

"What soort o' a fella 'ir ye, Bailie, 'at ye canna' be content 'athoot drivin' a puir lass tae her grave,—an' her wi' a pair o' beddrels dependin' on 'ir?"

"What's wrang wi' ye noo, 'Scobes?' Is the moon near the full?"

"Ye'r a hertless scoonerel, Bailie—that's what ye'r—tae raise distoorbance amang dacent folk.

Let the twa deein' weemin' dee in peace, an' then fecht it oot wi' the young yin."

The well-intentioned advice was, perhaps, too forcibly put; but there is no doubt it had its effect on "Big" Sam. He talked no more about going to America. Resigning his post with Johnnie Glenn's father soon after, he settled down soberly to the cooperage trade. Liza and he, cool for a time, gradually came round to much their former intimacy—though with less jesting, and no more marriage proposals.

Mrs. Lowry considered herself a "dune oot, deein' wummin," but felt no inclination to hurry over the process with undue haste.

People in the village did not think anything of a five or ten years' lying in bed—provided they were not suffering extremely, and were fairly comfortable in other respects.

Old Patsey Dinsmore, we remember—father to Felix—on reaching the age of seventy-five, received a present of a new pair of blankets, one cold Christmas season. The clothes which he wore were almost done, and he was unwilling to be more burdensome on his family than could possibly be avoided; so, shrewdly surmising that the new blankets would last out his time, the old man just "took to his bed," and patiently



lay for the remaining nine years of his life—although at no time unable to have risen, had he so desired.

Liza Lowry's "donsy" sister only lingered for another fifteen years, but the mother held out for twenty-six, by which time Liza herself had visibly failed; and, as we have seen, after a few further years of work, felt as if she must give up.

When the time came at which she felt herself free, neither she nor Sam manifested any inclination to change their way of living. Neighbours who were acquainted with the circumstances used to rally Sam at times, and say: "Why din't you an' ye'r Liza get spliced at last? Sure there's naethin' noo in the w'y?" and Sam would reply:

"Fegs, Liza wants a young yin noo—she's no anxious for anither aul' cripple tae nurse!"

Sam became banker for Liza, at the time of her retirement from the mill—agreeing to pay her the half-crown per week so long as the money lasted.

"The money 'll be maist usefu' tae me in ma business," Sam declared; "a can noo p'y kesh for a' materials: an' b' that means buy at lowest cut prices, forby gettin' the discoont."

After receiving the regular weekly instalments for considerably over five years, it dawned on Liza that the money must be almost, if not altogether, exhausted.

"Bit the interest, Liza—ye'r forgettin' aboot it." (As a matter of fact both principal and interest had been absorbed over a year and a half ago.)

Liza was not convinced; and, after a short time had elapsed, laid her case before Mr. M'Allister.

The minister, being well acquainted with the old woman's hard lot, with the assistance of one or two others as good-hearted as himself, collected, privately, another twenty pounds, which was also deposited with Sam.

"It's kin' o' the freen's," Liza declared, when it became known to her what had been done; "an' it's no' jest the same as bin' on the Perish; bit a'—niver—thocht,—a' fain houp a'll—no'—leeve a day langer—nor the—Almichty sees fit."

.

"A' hae jest yin requaist, Sam, tae mak'" (this on her death-bed): "an' that's, 'at ye come an' lie alangside o' me in my bit o' grun'. As ye ken, a' go intae ma fether's grave; bit whor



Barbara lies hesna bin appin't for twunty-twa years—an' get them tae pit ye as near on a level wi' me as possible—ye hae bin a guid freen tae me, Sam."

"Och! Liza, wummin, dinna' talk like that; for it's hard tae stan'."

. . . "Oh, it's a bonnie, bonnie mornin', mother: an' the birds er' singin' sae sweet; bit a'm very tired an' weary, mother: an' it's Sammie Bailie hes brok' ma hert."

"Liza, wummin, is ye'r min' wannerin'?—Sam's aside ye."

"Ay, din't a' ken ye'r aside me, Sam—dear Sam, bit a' think a' mun hae been dreamin'; for a' thocht it wus—that mornin' again, Sam, an'— . . . That's the mill bell, mother, an' a'll hae tae be gettin' up; bit a'm weary—weary—an' thinkin' lang tae get tae ma rest."

Liza went to her rest.

She need hardly have gone to the trouble of bequeathing her bits of things to Sam Bailie, for his body was laid beside hers in less than a week. The day of the funeral was wet. Sam remained long by the grave, "happing it up" to his satisfaction. A chill was contracted—from which pleurisy ensued—bringing about the end with alarming suddenness.

With the little money left over from Liza's testimonial, together with that realized by the sale of her few effects, the neighbours erected a marble tablet over the two newly-made graves, which bore this inscription:

"IN DEATH THEY WERE NOT DIVIDED."



THE OLD PRECENTOR

"CROSSES THE BAR."



Chapter VII.

THE OLD PRECENTOR "CROSSES THE BAR."

LIKE many another great man, Humphrey Barr was never fully appreciated in his own home circle. It had been his usual habit, for many years, to keep his Bible, psalm-book and tune-book, "The Whole Duty of Man" and "Old Moore's Almanac," in a little hole in the wall, beside his arm-chair at the fire-side; his chief amusement during the 'fore-suppers being the reading of some of his favourite passages, and the practising of a few pet tunes.

The old man was not well skilled, as we have seen, in musical notation; but, by dint of dropping his voice to its lowest depths, then running it up and down the scale a few times, he was able, as a rule, to arrive at something not far removed from the authorized pitch. The, to

some extent, unnatural sounds thus produced, when Humphrey was "tuning up," together with the few abortive attempts he generally made before getting on to the level, were not relished at all times by the female members of the family.

As has been shown on a former occasion, one of Humphrey's chief attributes—and one which had contributed largely to his success as a leader of Psalmody—was the determination and indomitable perseverance with which he surmounted difficulties. Before acknowledging himself defeated by reason of a miscalculation regarding pitch, he would, if at all within the bounds of possibility, force the air right through—even should the effort carry his voice to that extreme point, at either end of the scale, at which it absolutely refused to act. It was this commendable persistence under trying circumstances that, within the seclusion of his own home, led to his having to endure some rather humiliating suggestions and uncomplimentary criticism from his wife and daughters.

"Hae ye nae conseederation, man, for ither folk's feelin's, 'at ye mun gae on roarin' an' bilyorrin' an' screechin' like that, till we'r a' fairly deeved?

"Can't ye gang tae the barn, whor ye'll no' dae ony great herm—barrin' ye scaur the kye frae their fother?"

"Ye may weel refer tae the brute beasts," Humphrey would retort; "for they micht mak' mony a retional bein' think shame.

"Aften whun a'm followin' the plu', an' begin tae lilt a bit tune, the effick on the horses is wunnerfu'. A' declare a' cud tak' a dale mair wark oot o' them in that w'y than onybody else b' curses an' blows."

The fields and woods have always been acknowledged as most favourable to the pursuit and enjoyment of fine arts, such as music and poetry; although Humphrey Barr, while admitting that there were times when he seemed to be actually carried out of himself, and aloft, by the lilting of a favourite tune to an appropriate psalm while following the plough, and feeling himself all alone with Nature—excepting the patient, steadily-moving horses in front, and the crows and magpies alighting on the newly-turned-up furrow behind—still, there was a danger, as, when the plough-share came with rude and sudden force against a stone, of his feeling for the moment, as he said:

"Mair inclined fur tae sweer than praise the

Almichty; an' it aften tuk a hard twust tae arrest the sinfu' words on ma lips."

It was during the early mornings, or late nights, on which he was on his way with horse and cart to or from the city, that the man found in music by far the sweetest companionship.

In order to be in time for market, he was obliged to leave home before break of day; and it was at such times that his soul experienced high and sublime exultation, as he would croon to himself the first few verses of the 19th Psalm, to the tune of "St. David":

"The Heav'ns God's glory do declare,"

he would sing, as he watched the stars burning brightly overhead—his accompaniment being the monotonous rumbling of the cart.

Soon the darkness would begin to give way, the eastern sky becoming clear; and, as the King of Day would make his appearance, red and glorious, over the sea, Humphrey would continue:

"In them He set the sun a tent,
Who, bride-groom like, forth goes";

and by such means as this he often declared:

"The time pass't maist lamentably quick, an' a' was rale sorry tae fin' masel' in the big, bewulderin' toon."



It was on a certain starry November night that the precentor, coming home late in his empty cart, saw a vision which made him feel, for the moment, as if he were being in reality translated from this present evil world.

It was during that notable time—many will remember it—on which there was witnessed a magnificent display of the aurora. Beginning soon after sunset, the whole sky became lit up with the most exquisite colouring; the tints changing—now lemon, now pale pink, and again deep purple, which would overspread the firmament from horizon to horizon, like the huge spokes of a mighty wheel; then gradually fade away, the sky resuming its normal appearance.

Some of the villagers predicted from these signs severe and long-continued wars. Jamie Miskimmon took to renewed study of the prophecies, talked much of the fall of Apollyon's kingdom, the horn, the little horn, and other Biblical symbols.

Others not so well versed in such matters as Jamie, but perhaps of dispositions more practical—such as Dannie M'Cartney and his neighbour, Andy Semple—accepted the unusual display as an indication of "bad wather," and began to make preparations for the penning of the sheep.

Perhaps it should have been stated before that Humphrey, though strongly prejudiced in favour of the Psalms of David, and placing them far above all things else in the poetic art, secretly cherished the enjoyment of one or two favourite hymns, on which he was wont to regale himself on suitable occasions, but *never on Sabbath days.*

One of these was the well-known and popular hymn, beginning with the line,

"The spacious firmament on high,"

which was ever brought to his mind on calm, starlit nights—his soul finding much rapturous consolation in the majestic nature of the verses.

On this, the night of the vision, he had fallen asleep in the cart, singing to himself all about the "spangled heavens and starry frame."

How long he slept he could not tell; but, on awaking suddenly, and seeing the whole heavens arrayed in the sublime and brilliant colouring before alluded to, the precentor thought, for a moment, that he was, in reality, ascending to enter his reward.

It may be stated that the horse, finding himself no longer under control, had come to a full stop, and was browsing quietly on the bunker.



This, coupled with the fact of the surrounding landscape's being completely shut off by the deep box of the cart, no doubt lent reality to Humphrey's vision.

Another prime favourite in hymns was that beginning with the line,

"God moves in a mysterious way,"

which he was wont to sing to the old tune of "Walmer" during a thunderstorm. We admired his fortitude on one such occasion, when, taking shelter in his cottage, and finding the old man coolly splitting wood, the vivid lightning flashes playing about his head and around the steel blade of his hatchet, while he, quite unconcerned, went on with his work, singing the repeat lines:

"And rides upon the storm."

The temptation is strong to linger over the sayings and doings of Humphrey Barr —how he was, as he said, "lifted oot o' himsel'" at the sight of a soldier's funeral in the city.

"It wusna' a'thegither the solemn music o' the ban', playin' the Deed Merch—touchin' tho' that wus—at whuch a' fairly brok' doon; bit it wus the sicht o' the puir beast bin'

led alang efter the coffin, sae sorrowfu'-like, athoot its rider—it wus that 'at owercam' me completely."

Or of the occasion on which a strolling musician came round to his cottage, and the man so far forgot himself as to encourage the minstrel to play on the "sinfu' fiddle" such favourite airs of his early days as "Auld Robin Gray," "Robin Adair," and "The Flowers o' the Forest"—even listened to and kept time with both hands and feet such rollicking, wanton tunes as "The Soldier's Joy" and "The Wind that Shakes the Barley"—only redeeming himself from sheer intoxication by at last bestowing on the man an extra copper to play the "Old Hundred" in slow, solemn time.

Humphrey paid dearly on his death-bed for this unhallowed fondness for secular song of his early days.

His wife or daughter would look into the room during the night, inquiring as to his state, and the usual answer would be:

"A'm comfortable sae far as ma budy's concern't, bit ma heid's jest fair in a whurl wi' lilts o' sangs—singin', singin', singin' awa'—sae much sae 'at a' canna' get ma min' settled on what a' shud be thinkin' aboot.



"Sometimes it's 'Nora Creina,' or 'The Soldier's Joy'; at ithers it's "Ma Love she's but a Lassie yit,' or 'The Banks o' Allan Water.' A'm sair hadden unner an' grievously tormented."

Peace came to him at last, three days before his death. The "sinfu' lilts" vanished from his mind never to trouble him again, and their place was filled by snatches of his favourite psalms, set to their appropriate tunes, such as "New Lydia," "Arlington," and "Auburn."

Strange to relate, it was a verse from his mother's favourite hymn which was the last thing heard from his lips.

The beautiful June day was drawing to a close. The sun, like a huge ball of fire, was slowly disappearing behind the Tildree Hills. The Mill Band was practising on the lane—the sweet notes of "Scenes that are Brightest" being wafted along on the evening breeze.

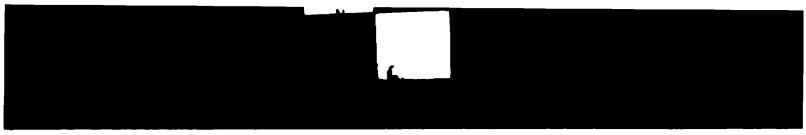
The old precentor asked to be propped up in bed that he might watch the beautiful sunset — his wife and family were gathered round.

"Gran'! ay, it's jest gran'!" he whispered, and then asked to be laid down again.

His lips were seen to be moving. The eldest girl bent her ear, and was just able to catch the words, breathed in feeblest of accents:

"The hour of my departure's come,
I hear the voice that calls me home;
And now, O Lord, let trouble cease,
And let—Thy—servant—die—in peace."

The sun disappeared in the west. The band had stopped playing on the lane. The soul of the old precentor went over to join the heavenly choir.



"ABOOT THE BRIG."



Chapter VIII.

"ABOOT THE BRIG."

THE reason why we loved to congregate "aboot the Brig" in preference to the pump, was owing to the increased facilities it afforded for the disposal and rest of our bodily frames.

It was not possible, for instance, for more than one individual, at a time, to rest on the pump, with one arm twisted round, his head reclining on the conical lid that covered the machinery within. True, another man might sit on the handle, and still a third rest his back against the far side; but, after all, the accommodation was of a limited character.

There was, of course, the monument—the low wall of which, under the railing, formed a seat for the younger inhabitants of the "upper

toon," when they were tired of playing ball against the gable of the Market-house.

For sober married men, however, the Brig was commodious—it was delightful! They could transpose themselves into so many different positions. When tired sitting on the wall, they drew up their feet, and enjoyed a recline. Then they would "slither" down, dive their hands into their breeches pockets, spread out their legs, all the while having a thorough support for their backs. When, for a time, in that position, they would turn round, rest their arms on the parapet, and gaze into the river underneath.

Then there was the spitting!—but why enlarge? The place was a delight; and it was possible for a man to thoroughly enjoy himself there for a couple of hours, after his day's work was done, even if there had not been a companion within a mile of him.

Besides, the Brig was the key to the whole position so far as the traffic of the village was concerned. People going or coming from head of street to the foot thereof, must, of necessity, pass over the Brig: there was no alternative.

From its neighbourhood could be seen the lovers turning into the Mill Lane; or, looking

up the "Meedas," we might watch one or two romantic couples sauntering along the "Fisherman's Path."

Southwards, we lazily viewed the inhabitants of the "Cadger's Close" working in their little gardens, which came right down to the water's edge, until opposite the "Carry," at which place a beautiful bend of the river, overshadowed by a row of ancient oak trees, interrupted the view.

On Sabbath evenings could be seen, through the low windows, the worshippers in the Methodist Chapel, whose western side wall rose right up from the river's brink, as if ground space at that particular spot were a most valuable commodity.

The two high arched doors in front of this chapel would have impressed a stranger with the thought that the congregation was so large as to require a double entrance, while, all the time, one of these same big doors led into the manse, which was concealed somewhere inside the building—a rather peculiar architectural construction, which may not have been meant to be misleading.

However that may be, we can vouch for the accuracy of the following incident related of

one of their ministers:—Rumours had come to the village that dissensions were going on in the cities over the question of "Communion Wine—should it be of fermented or unfermented quality?" causing some advanced spirits in the village congregation to exhibit feelings of discontent. This particular minister acknowledged himself to be a diplomatic as well as a peace-loving man. "So," said he, "I just mixed a little of both kinds together, and by such means was enabled to give a truthful answer to each party"!

It took a stranger some little time to get used to the "groaning" which always accompanied the prayers in the Methodist Chapel. On one occasion a young London lady was present at a service, and came near to getting completely upset by the zeal of the suppliants. Hearing a deep moan from one quarter of the building, followed by a sound as of one in the throes of death in another, the girl got thoroughly alarmed, and had to be taken outside.

Conversation about the Brig went on, for the most part, by fits and starts, and people only spoke when they had something worth saying; oftentimes there was a silence more eloquent than speech.

Frequently, Johnnie Glenn was very uncommunicative. He would saunter slowly up to the Brig, with his brows knitted, his mouth puckered up, and the general expression of his face most severe. At such times he would heave deep sighs, as if enduring acute mental anguish.

To those who knew him, all this was no index to the man's state of mind. In fact, Johnnie was probably meditating the while, with great complacency, over his last year's gains, or on the steady increase of his business in general.

When in this mood, he seldom spoke to anyone, or returned a salutation, excepting, perhaps, by the slightest inclination of the head. We did not bother him, or ply him with questions, at such times; we merely worked up the conversation to that certain pitch which, we knew, would bring him: the indication of this would be his growing restlessness—turning round, and then back again, or perhaps pressing his straw hat more closely over his forehead. At length he would open upon us somewhat fiercely:

"Augh, boys, a' wunner tae hear ye talkin' sic' perfe't blethers!

"Say es ye like, these Parliament men 'ir naethin' bit a set o' heepicrits an' place-hunters, a' through. They're jest like the lawyers: yin minnit ye wud think they wur gan' tae claw ither's een oot, an' the nixt they'll be as great as inkle [ingle] weavers.

"Whiles, doon there in the Coort-hoose, ye wud imagine the returneys wur gan' tae fairly kill ither—the w'y they badger an' misca', an' carry on.

"A' declare a' hae bin, mony a time, 'feared o' what wud happen whun they got oot tae the appin air; bit tae ma astonishment, they wud come, airm in airm—tak' their denner in my place, as jolly an' jokey es ye like, an' efterwards a' wud drive them awa', on the same car, es freenly a pack o' men es ye wud care tae see."

"It's the vera same wi' the Gover'ment men: they're only hoodwinkin' an' gullin' the puir folk 'at sen's them there.

"There's jest yin man 'at works wi' earnestness, an' zeal, an' conseestincy o' aim—an' hes din' a' alang—an' that's Mister Gledstin'. Es for the rest——" Johnnie here signified his contempt by the fierce manner in which he struck a match against the bowl of his cutty pipe.

Having relieved himself thus far, Johnnie would again relapse into silence, apparently altogether absorbed in his own reflections.

There was just one thing else that had the effect of arousing him from his reverie—a horse and car turning the corner, and rattling up the street. Johnnie would keep a critical eye on the animal's action as it came forward. We kept our eyes on Johnnie, and were enabled to judge pretty accurately, by the expression of his countenance, as to how the horse had impressed him. If he made no further sign than an insignificant nod or slight shake of the head, we knew the owner had nothing to be proud of, so far as that portion of his stud was concerned. If, on the other hand, Johnnie moved out a step, watched the horse's movements from behind in a rather interested way—his head slightly inclined to one side—we then took a more hopeful view.

"He appears a gey guid stepper, that new yin o' yours, Johnnie," we would remark. (Johnnie never had by any chance a bad animal—their faults and weak points only appearing after they were sold.)

"Ye may weel say that; fur he's jest the best hack within a clear ten mile o' whor we're

stannin'. Naebudy wud believe, unless they saw't, the amoont o' wark that horse can get through; an' as fur style an' appearance, his match is no' tae be fun' in the hale coonty."

"Aboot what did he coast ye, Johnnie, if it's no' an unfair quaestion?"

"Twal'-fifteen, tae a penny, wi' haff-a-croon back: an' twunty pun' wudna' buy 'im the day, es a'm a leevin' man."

"He lucks somethin' like a brocken-doon racer, Johnnie."

"A *hunter*, ye mean: he followed the Carlinfoord houn's fur mony a lang day; bit he's in better condeetion noo nor iver he wus then."

While thus discoursing, the horse in question would, perhaps, make his appearance round the corner of the street, on his return from a long day's posting with a commercial man.

The animal, whatever he may have been, was now cantering along quietly enough, giving due notice of his approach by a wheezy sound, resembling, to some extent, the back action of a pair of smith's bellows. There was also a suspicious "all-fourness" about the way in which he lifted his feet from the ground, as if he required oiling about the knee joints.

We watched Johnnie critically, as he surveyed his new purchase passing home.

"A'm dootin', Johnnie, he's a wee thocht touched in the wun'" (wind).

"Touched or no' touched—wun' or nae wun' —there's no' the like o' 'im in a' these perts."

Saying which, Johnnie would fling himself away homewards, and the rest of us soon followed his example, leaving the Brig in possession of odd groups of boys and girls, who were having great fun attempting to dance to the music of a drunken fiddler, who required to be propped up by one on each side, and another to steady his arm, as he attempted the performance of "Green grow the Rushes O."

As Johnnie Glenn has been brought into some degree of prominence in the foregoing, it is only fair to add that a rather rough exterior hid a more than usual complement of good-nature and a big kindly heart. Some of the pleasantest hours of his life were spent "aboot the Brig."





A RAILWAY KING.



Chapter IX.

A RAILWAY KING.

JAMIE MISKIMMON was one of those who remembered the introduction of the first vehicle properly equipped with wheels and springs, into our neighbourhood. Jamie never thought he would have lived to see a railway engine within three miles of the village, but he did, although he never risked his life in the train. Jamie even survived the introduction of telegraphic communication, and the laying of the Atlantic cable. What is more, he was alive and with us on that memorable Saturday night on which the new company, who took over the old mills, began practising that horrid importation, the steam horn, successor to the familiar old bell, which, with its cheerful ding-dong, had been our constant friend and companion for over half a century.

It was about bedtime, on this particular Saturday night, when the whole village was startled by a series of most unearthly sounds, coming from nobody knew where. Beginning with hoarse notes, the thing gradually gained in intensity until it became a heart-rending yell or screech, now fading away, only to come back with redoubled force, bringing the terrified people out into the street in hundreds, thinking the end of all things had come. It was long before we got accustomed to this awful belligerent, or could prevent ourselves from starting up with various local exclamations as its appalling notes rent the air.

Jamie Miskimmon and those of his class were naturally interested in these advanced modes of locomotion and communication, but not surprised, looking on them merely as a fulfilment of prophesy—as signs of the times, when knowledge would be running to and fro on the earth.

The railway, though proving itself of service to many, never became popular with the older inhabitants of the village, most of whom could not so far overcome their scruples as to patronize it, or even journey the three miles to the station in order to see the novelty. One or two of the

less prejudiced and more courageous of the Fathers, hearing such rosy accounts of its comfort and speed, braced themselves up, actually intending to risk a trial; but, on arriving at the station, and beholding the mighty monster of an engine dashing alongside the platform—panting and throbbing, and emitting steam with a deafening noise—their thoughts went back to loved ones, and to the fact that their affairs were not just settled up quite as they could have wished them; so they forfeited their tickets, and returned again to the village on Johnnie Glenn's post-car.

Those more venturesome, who braved the perils of the journey and survived, had many strange tales to tell as to how, for example, once the people were shut in, the speed gradually increased, until when going down past Moss-vale Mill "the telegraph posts wur' whurlin' past at sic' a rate 'at we jist geed oorsels up a'thegither—feelin' shair she wud' niver be able tae stap. We shut oor een ticht, an' committed oorsels maist earnestly tae the Almichty's han's, an' we did draw lang breaths whun she began tae slow up."

Or of the curve round a certain rocky part of the coast in which "the yin side o' the

kerridge wus sae muckle eelevated abune the ither 'at a pipe-heid lyin' on the sate trinnell't richt doon tae the apposite side."

Also, the tunnels were very fearsome at first; "bit yinst ye got intae the l'y o' them, stuck ye'r thoombs in ye'r lugs, an' shut ye'r een ticht, ye harl'y ken't tae ye wur' in daylicht agen."

These and other stories of a similar nature from survivors served, no doubt, in some degree to diminish the desire for railway travelling amongst the villagers; but there were other and more weighty reasons as well which affected men of the Jamie Miskimmon and Felix Dinsmore class—reasons hard to be got over, and which time did but little to modify.

Not to speak of the Sabbath-day traffic, which in itself would have been quite enough to condemn it, the promoters had been rather unfortunate in their selection of workmen at the time the line was being made, having imported a gang of wild, up-the-country navvies (we always said "up-the-country" when speaking of the South), who, as a class, seemed the very embodiment of wickedness, fearing, apparently, neither God nor man.

The whole country was in terror of these blackguards,—no decent man, woman, or child feeling safe to be abroad after dark. As for fowl or anything of value left lying about—well, it was small pity of those who were so careless.

They received one practical lesson, these wild, "up-the-country" savages, which came near to cutting short some of their discreditable careers.

It was on a certain evening when forty or fifty of them were returning from work, crowded into three or four empty wagons, which were driven by an engine from behind. By some mischance the couplings became detached, when, as people expressed it, "gan' doon the incline" at Moss-vale Mill. Humphrey Barr witnessed the occurrence from behind the gate at a level crossing, being on his way home from the city with his horse and cart. So we will just relate his version, as near as possible in his own words:

"The gates wur' shut, an' a' wus expeckin' tae see the train passin', whun, tae ma surprise, a' hear'd the maist tremendous screechin' an' yellin', an', afore a' knowed, a wheen wagons tore past 'athoot ony ingin, an' filled wi' these evil navvies, cursin' an' sweerin' at the tap o' their voices.

"A' fain houp a'll niver leeve tae see sic' a sicht agen; an' es tae whativer wud' become o' them, a'll no' attemp' tae guess; bit, jidgin' b' the rate they wur' gan' at, a' wud' imagine, like the herd o' swine, they wud' sune be a' in the saut water [sea].

"God keep us a', it wud' be a sma' loss wur' they in ony w'y prepared; bit, tae think o' the profane, blasphemous wretches bin' whurl't intae their Maaker's presence in sic' a state—a' jist trimmel tae think o' them."

In this, as in how many similar cases, Providence was merciful, not visiting the wicked according to their deserts.

A number of loaded ballast trucks happened to be stationary on the line, near to a certain junction, and into these the fugitive wagons, with their precious freight, dashed, maiming several, and severely shaking most; but the catastrophe passed off without loss of life.

Betty Downie journeyed once on the line, having occasion to visit a relative, who was a resident in the workhouse of the county town. Betty's precautions were of so thorough a nature as to almost have the effect of causing her to be carried beyond her destination.

Some neighbours saw her off, their final charges being, as usual—"Stap ye'r lugs, an' shut ye'r een, an' ye'll niver ken tae ye'r there."

Betty obeyed the instructions to the letter; but the train pulled up at the station of the county town before ever the old woman thought they had got under way; and, but for the fact that a gentleman sitting opposite, taking in the situation, shook up Betty, and kindly assisted her to alight, she would have been carried to regions unknown.

On future occasions Betty preferred to walk the distance rather than to incur such another awkward risk on the rail.

Now that Mr. M'Allister has long since gone to his rest, it can be no great harm to relate an incident which befel that good man on one of the rare occasions in which he travelled by train.

In was the close of Synod week in the city. The minister was returning home, his mind filled with thoughts of motions, resolutions, amendments, and procedure in general. He was the only occupant of a compartment, and being, as we are aware, rather given to absent-mindedness, he fell into a lengthy reverie, and was carried past his station, never rousing

himself up until the carriages were being backed into the shed for the night at the half-way station—some fourteen miles from home.

In those days a man hesitated before incurring the cost of a night's accommodation at an hotel, or car hire for a long journey; so the minister, knowing the country well, walked home at his leisure. It was a fine summer night; he did not reach home till daybreak, but his mind was filled all the way with pleasant thoughts, which caused the journey to seem short.

Isaac Cupples (father of George) had the courage to begin railway travelling at the age of eighty-three; but this was owing to his being one of the rich men of the neighbourhood, and holding three original shares in the line, to the value of £150.

It was natural that Isaac should overcome his scruples and patronize his own Company; for, once his name was registered in the books, and he became a possessor of scrip, Isaac took the line, in a manner, under his protection, looking upon it, to a large extent, as his own.

Though not actually on the directorate, the old man looked upon himself as a by no means unimportant factor in the management of affairs, on every occasion classing himself

amongst those who were responsible for results.

"We cud' a' pied a percentage mair o' deeviden', bit thocht it wiser tae carry ower a substantial balance tae the incomin' half-year. An' a wheen hunners can be very profitably spent in supplementin' an' improvin' the rowlin' stock.

"We'll hae tae conseeder aboot lowerin' the teriffs awee, in view o' ither competin' companies—'spacially tae places whor ither lines come in—even if we shud' raise them tae districks in whuch we hae a monopoly.

"It's a weel-ken't fac' 'at the bulk o' oor profits is made frae the third-cless passengers. We'll hae tae see aboot gettin' raifs [roofs] on thir kerridges, an' makin' them a thocht mair comfortable: es it is, they'r no muckle better nor cattle trucks."

Thus did Isaac discourse to the neighbours, who looked upon him with a certain amount of awe, as a man having a voice in the management of such a concern.

On a certain Friday, Isaac had taken a return market ticket to the city; and on his arrival at the terminus during the evening, in time, as he thought, for the five o'clock train, he was,

to his surprise, stopped at the barrier by a burly porter.

"Too late, sir; train's about to start."

"Bit, she's no' awa' yit—a'll hae time tae get in if ye'll let me through."

"Can't do it, sir; time's up, and last bell's rung."

"A' mun get hame, nae metter aboot the bell. Appin the gate, man, instead o' stannin' bletherin' there."

"Stand back, sir."

"Wha ir' ye tellin' tae stan' back? Dae ye ken a'm a shareholder in this line?"

"It don't matter, sir—must obey orders. You can't go by this train—next, 7-15."

"Ye'r an impident spulpin, whaiver ye ir'. A'll report ye tae ye'r employers, an', what's mair, a'll no' go b' the saven-fifteen, nor b' ony ither train; a'll trevil hame.

"There's ma name" (handing him the back of an envelope); "tak' it tae ye'r mesters, an' tell them a' hae left on ma feet, afore a' wud' wait for the nixt train; an' a'll warn whun they hear o't, it'll no' be sae guid for you—ye'll no' be there, a' reckon, whun a' come back—if iver a' dae—tae stan' in the w'y o' folk catchin' thir train. Ye'r pied oot o' the Company's

money for bin' ceevil, an' no' for offendin' them 'at's gettin' ye ye'r leevin'."

Isaac had rather over-estimated his physical powers, forgetting that he was no longer young, or even moderately old.

When four miles from the city, his strength completely broke down, obliging him to sink by the wayside in a half-fainting condition.

Fortunately, a good Samaritan was at hand, in the person of a kindly farmer, who helped the old man into his house, bestowing upon him the necessary rest and refreshment.

The nearest station was only half a mile distant, to which the farmer conveyed Isaac in his cart.

The "7-15" was not timed to stop at this station, but the station-master, being a kindly-disposed man, and holding in his hands a wonderful power in the shape of a certain little instrument, which he set agoing, with an uncanny tick, tick, he had the effect of causing the train to stop, thereby allowing Isaac to reach before nightfall his home and his anxious friends.

Isaac gave the farmer's children half-a-crown amongst them, thanked the farmer heartily, and was full of gratitude to the station-master,

whom he promised to recommend to the directors at next Board meeting. At the same time he could not altogether hide from himself the feeling that the railway had rather the best of him, although mentally adding, by way of set-off—"*Had a' bin only twunty years younger!*"

Harry Meehan spent a lifetime in the Company's service without attaining to anything higher than the rank of head porter, and yet Harry, on one occasion, performed an act of heroism which will live long in the annals of the village. Mrs. Huntley, of the Manor House, in crossing the lines, was unaware of the approach of an express. Harry, taking in the awful situation at a glance, cleared the platform with a bound, and was just in time to grasp the poor lady as the buffers of the engine were within a yard of her. Both fell heavily to the ground, but clear of the express,—their escape being little short of miraculous.

Harry received a ten-pound note and a letter of thanks from the manor; but many a man has earned the Victoria Cross and a pension for a less courageous deed.

It was averred that Harry's rather meagre brain capacity precluded him from promotion, so he was doomed to plod along to the end in

the lower ranks; but many will be glad to endorse this faint record of his bravery.

George Johnston, *beau ideal* of railway guards, almost deserves a chapter to himself, and he may get it, too—if not during the present century, perhaps early in the next. In fancy we can see him yet—burly figure, iron-grey whiskers and moustache, and still the humorous twinkle in his eye, as he was wont to walk along the platforms of the country stations, especially one which he was fond of designating "George'stown."

Courteous, civil, obliging; never an official more quick to pounce on a fraudulent traveller, or one more ready to relent did the culprit but throw himself on his mercy on the plea of hard times.

George has gone, like many another old landmark; but still the railway grows and extends, opening wider its arms as the traffic presses from every quarter. "Passenger" trains, "goods" and "minerals," "specials," "mails," and "boat expresses," go shunting, and shrieking, and flying along. Should the reader like to become acquainted with the secret motive power which keeps all the vast machinery in thorough working order, it can be seen any day in the

person of a small man who walks about the city terminus platform, wearing a white hat, set at a slight angle on his head, his hands buried underneath the tails of his coat. This individual is familiarly known among the staff as the "G.M.", and stands out prominently as a connecting-link between the present and the past: a rare combination of the good old English gentleman and the efficient railway manager, in touch with even the most obscure officer in the service; while, at the same time, the "grand old man" of railway circles. Long may he live and prosper, and may—but it is George Johnston's voice we hear:

"Time's up, gentlemen!—take seats!—right!"



ISAAC CUPPLES'S SECOND WIFE.



Chapter X.

ISAAC CUPPLES'S SECOND WIFE.

HOWEVER it came about that Isaac Cupples, at the age of seventy, and after having lived a widower for over thirty years, risked the ill-will of his relations, and the frustration of his own future happiness, by taking to himself a second wife, nobody seemed able to explain.

The man himself maintained all along that there was no one in the world more opposed to marrying a second time than he; and yet it seemed to be his fate to take a second wife against his will and better judgment.

Of course she was a widow, and that counts for much. Widows are an insoluble, mysterious problem. How it happens that

they so often carry away, with apparent ease, the matrimonial prizes from their less experienced sisters has ever been a puzzling question, and bids fair to remain one.

Her name was Mrs. Sharpe, and she belonged to a district called "The Liberty," convenient to the ancient county town. It was during a visit to friends in our neighbourhood that she happened to come across Isaac Cupples in the following curious manner:

As the worshippers were wending their way down the aisles of the meeting-house, at the close of a service, on a certain summer sabbath-day, the widow's ringlets chanced to become entangled on the button of Isaac's coat; and from that moment she professed to know instinctively that she had met her fate for the second time.

She took no special pains to keep her feelings secret in regard to this important matter; but rather seemed to delight in proclaiming them abroad, and particularly in quarters where the expression of them was most likely to be carried to Isaac's ears.

Of course she had dreams. On two successive nights she dreamt she saw Isaac's funeral pass; and that was certainly a marriage.

She had a distinct itching in the hollow of her left hand, which was a never-failing omen that money was about to come to her; and one morning she saw three magpies.

All these things served to confirm her first premonitions.

She prolonged her visit to the neighbourhood, embracing every opportunity of meeting the object of her heart's desire, and naturally, it may be supposed, laying herself out to his now somewhat obscured vision in her most fascinating and attractive colours.

As may be imagined, the whole details of the siege were fully discussed round many a tea-table and fireside—the chances for and against the eventual surrender of Isaac's heart and purse giving rise to much cogitation and surmise.

As can easily be understood, a considerable amount, if not all, of this tittle-tattle came to the old man's ears, and to those of his relatives, and was by no means pleasing to either.

To such a length did the country's gossip extend, that Isaac resolved on a bold stroke—he would meet the enemy face to face, and demand a cessation of hostilities.

Accordingly, on the the very next sabbath afternoon, at the conclusion of the service,

Isaac asked the widow to walk a step or two with him, as he had something on his mind which he wished to communicate.

Mrs. Sharpe hastily drew down her veil to conceal the blushes, should any appear. She was not a little fluttered; for, apparently, all she had hoped for was coming even sooner than she had expected.

The couple sauntered down the green lane in the direction of the old graveyard, the congregation watching them with amused interest. Those who had remained sanguine as to the chances of Isaac's coming out of the engagement with flying colours felt their confidence now failing them considerably.

On the two went, chatting about various unimportant matters; opened the creaking old iron gate of the burying-ground, and picking their steps reverently over the graves.

The old man led the way to his own plot of ground, pointed out the tombstone over his first wife's grave, detailing over again her many estimable qualities, and the darkness she had left behind her when she departed this life.

He also indicated the resting-places of various kindred, including several of his family, who had died in infancy. The spot which he had

reserved for himself was shown to the widow; and after some few appropriate remarks concerning the end and measure of life, the couple seated themselves on the tombstone, above the ashes of the long-lost wife of his youth, and Isaac unburdened his heart.

"A' hae bin hearin' a guid dale o' clash an' nonsense, Mrs. Sherpe, concernin' the quaestion o' a second merrige, an' thocht it wus fu' time the hale thing wus pit a stap tae.

"Vera likely ye'r no' tae blame for mair'n the half o' a' the havers 'at ir' gan' aboot roon' the country; bit, in ony case, a' wud' jist like ye tae unnerstan', yinst for a', that a' hae a very great respek' for ye an' a' ye'r connection; bit, es tae merryin' ether you or ony ither wumman, at my time o' life, it's a thing a'll niver dae, nor coodna' even think o'."

Such a speech as this to most women would have been like a bomb-shell falling amongst her most cherished citadels and fortifications, rendering it only a question of how to surrender the contest without loss of honour.

Mrs. Sharpe, however, was well skilled in the tactics of love's warfare, apparently having made provision for all contingencies before ever entering on the campaign.

Consequently, she kept cool from first to last, hearing Isaac out with the most perfect composure. When he had finished, she merely showed her hand to a certain extent; reminded him of the strange manner in which they had been brought together, first of all; dwelt at some length on the various dreams and omens which had followed; and ended up by assuring him that all his protestations went but a short way in shaking her faith in what was destined to be; and that she would continue to hope and still hope.

"Like a sensible wumman, gang hame an' say ye'r prayers, an' think nae mair o' what can niver happen," were Isaac's parting words; but, perhaps, many readers who know something of frail human nature, will not be altogether surprised to hear that, during the very next week, Isaac sent the widow a message to meet him in the city on the following Friday.

The trysting-place was the yard at which the old man put up his horse.

The couple went about from place to place during a good part of the day without anything of importance being communicated from either side.

Isaac had various purchases to make, including a set of gig harness, clover seed, artificial manure, and poison for rats.

They proceeded to an eating-house, and had dinner during the afternoon; and shortly afterwards, Isaac, thinking it time to start for home, directed the course again to the yard.

The horse was yoked to the old-fashioned trap, and the various purchases examined and put in.

"A' ordered the gig harness, the clover seed, an' Gooldin's manure.

"There's the sterch, tay, an' shuggar, Spurgeon's sermon, an' rat pooshin. A' think iverythin's richt."

With one foot on the step of the gig, and holding out his hand to the widow, he resumed:

"Weel, aboot this merrige, Mrs. Sherpe—if it's tae be dune ava, the sunner the better, an' get it ower. A'm ter'bly perplex't; bit, it's maybe a' for the best. Can ye b' ready on Thursday week?

"There's a bit paper" (handing her a ten-pound note); "it 'll b' usefu' fur ye'r ootfit."

The widow was naturally a good deal agitated at the suddenness of the proposal, but managed

to signify her assent in a clear voice as Isaac drove away from the yard.

Having relieved himself thus far, the old man occupied himself by setting his affairs in order, making over a portion of his estate to his relatives, which helped to modify considerably their strenuous opposition to the forthcoming important event in the even-tide of his life.

It was on the evening of the marriage that Isaac acquitted himself, perhaps, least creditably of all.

There was a mixed party at the house of the bride—the two sets of friends managing to keep pretty much at the different sides of the room.

Mr. M'Allister was present, and did what he could to warm up the company, and draw them together, by a witty speech he made while proposing the healths of the happy couple.

Isaac, getting up with some difficulty to respond, stammered through a sentence or two, when, feeling his voice failing him, he completely broke down.

Had he stopped there, it would not have been quite so bad—people might have put down the failure to excessive heart-full affection; but he

made a further attempt, and this is what he said:

"Mr. M'Allister an' freens, this may be a subject o' jokin' an' fun tae ye a'; bit a' can assure ye it's nae lichtsome metter wi' me.

"A' hae bin reg'larly forced intae this merrige, greatly aginst ma wull.

"Naebudy cud' a' bin mair opposed tae sich a step nor me; bit— . . . bit . . . "

Isaac could get no further, again giving way to emotion.

His wife promptly took charge of him—not, it may be imagined, feeling in the most amiable mood—while doing her best to apologize for him to the company, on the grounds of extra fatigue and advancing years.

The party, at no time very joyous, felt completely damped by the occurrence, and one by one the guests excused themselves, and made for their own homes.

Matters did not, eventually, turn out so badly as Isaac had feared. The old man and his wife, once they got into each other's ways a little, managed to pull along better, perhaps, than many who had taken a similar venture under more promising auspices.





THE WIDOW'S SON.



Chapter XI.

THE WIDOW'S SON.

LOGAN LOWRY, Liza's father, died young, and people said had he been spared to reach even middle life, he would have left his family comfortably provided for, and would have improved his own position socially.

Logan had entered the service of the Mill Company when quite a lad; and, displaying more than ordinary aptitude, was soon promoted to the mechanic's shop. Here he worked his way steadily on, step by step, until, when the fever caught and carried him off, he had got so far advanced as to be appointed night foreman, which practically meant his being left in charge of the mill during the "night-shift."

A fine, honest, steady, hard-working fellow he was, and widespread regret was felt by the whole neighbourhood at his untimely death.

There was just one subject about which some people, perhaps, considered Logan inclined to be a little too enthusiastic, and that was Orangeism; but the man has yet to be born who has not some pet weakness or hobby, and in many cases he is nothing the worse for it.

Logan (or Logie, as he was familiarly called) had been admitted a member of the village Orange lodge at an early age; and, as in the mill, he had risen step by step until he attained the dignity of mastership itself, and a most popular and highly-respected master he was.

It is, perhaps, only right to mention that this same subject of Orangeism was the one—we believe the only—"bone of contention" between Logie and his wife.

Mrs. Lowry was of a nervous temperament—her at no time very robust health making her, perhaps, somewhat irritable at times. Strong partisanship was altogether repugnant to her, and gave her a more than ordinary amount of uneasiness.

Neither did she relish the lodge nights, which too often meant late hours, and perhaps some conviviality. (The lodge always met in a room in Johnnie Glenn's father's public-house.)

Logie, though steady in the main, was on occasions led on by company to take an extra glass or two, and at such times he may have aired his principles and sentiments a little too freely.

Then again, the lodge and lodge meetings could not be carried on without the spending of some money, and this was another point to which Mrs. Lowry could never give countenance, she being of a naturally economical and careful disposition. But what preyed most of all on the poor woman's mind was the feeling of bitterness and strife engendered between man and man.

She could not hide from herself the feeling that every flutter of an Orange flag, and every beat of an Orange drum, carried with it a corresponding amount of gall and wormwood to the hearts of the opposite party.

The bare idea of her husband having enemies—enemies with whom he might some day be led into deadly combat—was a source of never-ending worry and vexation to his wife, especially when she remembered that even in our quiet and peaceful neighbourhood there were times when party feeling ran so high that even human lives had been paid in forfeit, as the result of too free expressions of opinion.

This, then, was Logie Lowry's one weak point, saving which he was a kind husband and father, a good neighbour, highly respected and well beloved by all those with whom he came in contact, whether in his private life or at the mill.

When once the July celebrations were over, hasty words and fiery speeches forgotten, the regalia folded and laid past for another year, the big drum covered up and placed in a corner of the lodge-room, then Logie, like most of his brethren, settled down to work, and at heart bore little ill-will to anyone.

In a mixed community like that engaged in a mill or factory there is bound to be a certain amount of friction from time to time, so long as zealous politicians keep the fire burning at head-quarters, and enthusiastic agitators set the ball rolling down through the ranks.

So far as our mill was concerned, this party spirit was carried on mostly in the line of good-natured chaff; and we think we are correct in stating that this state of affairs was largely owing to two individual influences amongst the community—Logie Lowry, night manager, was the one, and "wee" Patsy Roche, machinist's assistant, was the other.

Patsy was a Catholic, and a general favourite all over the works. Honest, straightforward, and obliging, he had the gift of attracting everyone's good opinion; and as for enemies, he had not one.

Patsy was, notwithstanding, most loyal to his own cause; and when occasion required, took up the defensive in a most spirited and plucky manner. People used to say that when Patsy's "dander" was up, he would have faced Goliath.

On more than one occasion, when the little fellow imagined himself put upon, or driven into a corner, off would go jacket, waistcoat, and shirt, and Patsy would "square up" to a man twice his size.

It was at this point that Logie's influence would make itself felt. Logie and Patsy had always been the best of friends, and at the critical moment the big man was sure to turn up, lift Patsy, carry him bodily off under his arm, and set him down beside his work at the machine, amidst the hearty laughter of both sides.

.

Seldom, if ever, was the whole village thrown into such consternation and grief as on the morning on which "wee" Patsy was killed.

It was a habit of many of the workers when on night duty to snatch an hour's sleep at times if all were going well, and nothing immediately requiring their attention. They generally arranged with each other to be called at the proper time, when their presence at their various posts would be required.

On this particular morning—the 10th of July—Patsy had squeezed himself inside a felt sheeting, which wound like belting round the cylinders of the big machine. The machine was idle during the night, but would be set agoing at five o'clock; so Patsy's chum promised to arouse him in good time.

The proceeding was risky above measure, but it had been done often and often before without accident; consequently, a foolhardy feeling was engendered.

The felt was warm as a double blanket, and as it hung comparatively loose when the machine was not working, made a bed equal to the best hammock. Once the machine had got connected with the engine, the felt was tightened up by the rapid revolutions of the cylinder.

By some mischance Patsy was forgotten by his chum. The machine was set agoing—the great cylinders commenced their rapid

revolutions. A piercing shriek rent the air, and was heard above all the mighty noise and din of the machinery.

Logie Lowry was the first to arrive at the spot, and the sight that met his eyes was too appalling for description. The engines were stopped without delay, and Patsy's poor mangled form was gently lifted out by Logie amid the awe-stricken looks of the vast crowd of workers whom the sad news had drawn to the spot.

It was in Logie Lowry's arms that the poor bruised form lay, for Patsy was, strange to say, partly conscious; and the attempt to lay him on a stretcher had caused him such intense agony, that Logie sat down on a bench and nursed him like a tender mother. It was only by his looks that the poor sufferer could express his gratitude, for his agony was intense.

The doctor came with all speed, but nothing could be done save the administering of opiates, which minimized the pain in some degree.

"He may last for an hour," said the doctor, himself deeply moved; "but it can hardly be more."

The poor little fellow's features assumed a sickly smile at the words. He looked into Logie's face as if in appeal, and the lips

tried to form something like "mother" and "pray."

Logie conveyed to him that the sad news was being kept from his mother for so far, and that he himself would gently break it to her when all was over.

Another faint attempt at a smile, and again the lips moved, as if requesting a prayer.

Logie looked around at the workers in consternation. The priest had been sent for, but was from home, having been summoned the night before to the bedside of a dying parishioner.

"Boys, there's Catholics amang ye," said Logie, appealingly. "Can't some of ye say a bit prayer—Paternoster, or what ye may ca' it—whativer's the rule in ye'r Church?"

No one responded, though many eyes were wet.

"Can naebody—Catholic or Protestan'—say a bit word fur a deein' cratur'? Boys, a'm fair ashamed o' ye. Some o' ye gan' tae ye'r places o' worship ivery Sabbath, an' hae bin teacht in the Sabbath-school.

"God kens a' wudna' b' much o' a' han' at conductin' a prayer-meetin' masel', niver haen' got ayont the Lord's Prayer, 'at a' learnt at ma

mother's knee: bit a'll say 't, even if a' can say nae mair."

Pulling off his cap, Logie began in a broken voice. The workers were wonder-stricken, for the man was actually praying—"Oor Faither, who art in heaven . . . oh, peety this puir chap. . . . Thou had peety on the weeda an' her son. . . . Oh, hae peety on this weeda's son, an' on the puir mother hersel'. . . . Meetigate his pain, oh great Lord—if it be Thy wull . . . an' tak' 'im hame tae Thysel', like a tired lamb. Amen."

"Amen and amen," said a strange voice behind him, and when the workers lifted their heads they saw that Father Lynch had come in during Logie's prayer, and was standing with uncovered head—the big tears coursing down his cheeks.

Poor Patsy was soon free from pain, and passed away in Logie's arms, with a smile on his countenance, just as the priest had administered the last rites.

It was, of course, Logie who went before and prepared the widow for the overwhelming news.

It was Logie who was unremitting in his attentions at the house of mourning during the next night and day, and it was Logie who, on

the evening before the "Twelfth," when the mill was shut down for the holiday, and the workers were paid, headed the list of subscriptions for the bereaved, which was so generously responded to that the poor woman was placed beyond the reach of want for many months to come.

It was also Logie, the master of the Orange lodge, who requested that the time of Patsy's funeral might be altered to an hour earlier, in order that himself and almost all the members of the lodge might attend before they started in procession for the place of meeting; and it was particularly noticed that not the slightest suggestion of Orangeism—not even a handkerchief—was displayed at the funeral.

To crown all, it was by Logie Lowry's instructions that when at length the procession was on its way to the field, the music of fife and drum ceased when passing the priest's manse.

On the return journey in the evening the priest himself was at the gate, beckoning with his hand. Flags and banners were lowered, out of respect, and the whole lodge stood attention as Father Lynch uncovered his head.

"To the master and all the members of this lodge, I desire to return sincere thanks on behalf of Widow Roache and myself for your great

kindness and practical sympathy to her at this the time of her affliction."

"Three cheers for Father Lynch!" someone shouted, perhaps on the impulse of the moment, and without due consideration; but the cheers were taken up, and rang out heartily.

"God bless you, friends, one and all," responded the priest, visibly affected, as he turned into the manse, and the procession slowly moved on to the village.

And this is what resulted from the death of "wee" Patsy Roache.





THE SEXTONESS.



Chapter XII.

THE SEXTONESS.

THE "cómmit-tee," as we called the ten men who looked after the business and financial affairs of the congregation, assembled one evening to discuss the fate of no less a personage than Nancy Carmichael, the sextoness.

That old woman, with the large black-velvet bonnet and grey shawl, had borne rule over the people so long that it was thought the time had arrived for considering the propriety of offering her a retiring allowance; not exactly for the purpose of depriving her of the post—few would have had the courage to make that suggestion—but in order to appoint a younger woman as chief assistant to Nancy, thereby raising the latter to a kind of *ex-officio* standing, which would mean no degradation of position, while at the same time her responsibility would be lightened.

To show how minutely as well as politically the details of the question had been gone into, it was unanimously resolved to offer the assistantship to Nancy's married daughter, a woman with a small income and a large family, to whom it was thought the post would be most acceptable, the more so on its being understood that in the event of Nancy's death the younger woman would succeed to the full command.

Everything had been thus arranged, even to the appointment of the salary and fees—Nancy was to get all the marriage fees, and the daughter the christening ones.

In this also a wise decision had been come to, for it was well known that the christening fees amounted to so little that the committee felt sure Nancy would never take them into her calculations at all.

In fact, such a thing as a gratuity on the occasion of a christening had been heard of only once within our recollection, and that was during the memorable summer in which young Rab Dinsmore (nephew to Felix) brought his wife and family over from America on a holiday. This same Rab was of the droll sort. When sending to the home newspapers an account of his marriage, he added a P.S.—"Sweethearts

at a distance will please accept this, the only, intimation."

An additional baby girl had come to the couple during the voyage and was ready for baptism on the second Sabbath after their arrival in the village.

The reason why we all remembered the incident so well was owing to Mrs. Dinsmore's having brought a nurse and a servant to attend on baby during the ceremony, thereby causing Rab to look very confused and awkward amongst them all. On this occasion the said Mrs. Dinsmore, who was a woman of large ideas, made Nancy Carmichael very happy by presenting her with half a sovereign.

"Had a' kent what wus comin'," said the sextoness, "a' wud' a' brocht oot ma mother's big chayney bowl, whuch wud' a' luck't better nor the aul' cracked blue yin wi' the white line roon' the edge o't. An' a' wud' a' gan' tae the pump fur a drap o' guid clear water. Es it wus, a' jist tuk' a bowlfu' frae the water-table ootside the meetin'-hoose gate, whuch wus a wee broon in the colour on accoont o' the rain."

Another circumstance that fixed this christening ceremony indelibly on our minds, was

the peculiar name which was bestowed on the little stranger.

A lady on board the vessel had taken a great interest in the arrival of baby under the somewhat unusual circumstances, and had spoken of it as an "ocean pearl."

The words took a violent hold on the mother, who, as we have seen, was a woman of broad mind and principles; so she astonished Rab by announcing that the child was to be called "Oceana Pearl." Accordingly, "Oceana Pearl Dinsmore" she was baptized.

When Felix heard of it, he said:

"They micht es weel hae ca'd it Boanerges', whun they wur' at it."

The committee, as has been stated, had all things arranged anent the mode of procedure in regard to Nancy, and were about to appoint a deputation to wait on the old lady, convey to her the resolution, and receive her reply; when, without ceremony, the door was pushed open, and Nancy herself confronted them.

At best, the old woman had an austere look. She had a habit of clasping her under lip over the upper, which gave her the appearance of great determination and fixity of purpose. The keen grey eyes which looked out

from below the border of her white cap, and under the scoop of the big black-velvet bonnet, had not much softness in their glance.

There was a dead silence, as well as considerable trepidation, at Nancy's thus appearing in the vestry.

"A' hae an inklin', freens, as tae what ye'r aboot the nicht. A wee bird hes bin whusperin' intae ma lug.

"A' may as weel tell ye 'at ye needna' be at the bother o' tryin' ye'r Deevil's erts tae get rid o' me, an' get anither—a younger yin—appointed in ma place; fur, a' can tell ye 'at ye'll no' fin' me a Humphrey Barr—as ye'll ken tae ye'r cost.

"Nane o' ye'r saft sape an' barley shuggar fur me, sich es setting me up on a peedistal o' deegnity, wi' anither wumman daen the wark, an' liftin' the big en' o' the p'y." (Could Nancy have been listening at the key-hole?)

"Whun a'm no' able fur ma duties a'll let the meenister ken." (That was hard on the committee.) "A' wus b' him appointed, an' it'll be intae his han's (if God spares baith o' us) 'at a'll tenner ma lines, whun it comes tae that.

"It's weel befittin' a wheen o' start-ups like yez tae be plottin' an' palaverin' tae pit a puir aul' wummin oot o' her w'y o' leevin'."

It must not be supposed that the tears came at this point, or the voice grew uncertain. On the contrary, the old woman's tone was becoming louder; eye and posture more threatening. She advanced a step, and, one or two on the front forms moved to the back—to escape the draught from the door.

"Nancy Carmichael hes bin here afore maist o' ye wur' born, an' she'll be here efter a guid wheen o' ye 's deed.

"A humilin' sicht ye ir', some o' ye, wi' ye'r lang backs an' bendy legs, like as if ye had bin rocked in three-legg't pots."

This was a home-thrust at Felix Dinsmore, whose nether limbs were rather coved, owing to the nature of his calling.

"A'll go tae the meenister the morn's mornin', an' a'll warn' he'll no' see a puir budy imposed on, tae shoot the new-fangled notions o' a wheen o' tailors an' shaemakers, an' Jack-o'-a'-trades.

"If ye hae din' wi' a' the Deevil's wark 'at ye hae on han', a'll lock up the dors."

This was a hint that the meeting was over, and had quite the same effect upon the committee as the pronouncement of the benediction.

No one spoke a word; and it must be acknowledged the people felt rather crestfallen as they put on their hats and went out, leaving Nancy in possession of the field.

As was quite to be expected, Nancy's complaint to the minister had the desired effect. Who ever in their distress appealed to Mr. M'Allister in vain? The resolution of the committee came to nought, Nancy being allowed to pursue the even tenor of her way.

On the very next Sabbath, during the reading of the first Scripture lesson, the old sextoness walked slowly round the house—up one aisle, round in front of the pulpit, and down the other—carrying her head high in the air, the under lip being clasped over the upper one more firmly than ever. As she passed the pews in which sat the members of committee, she darted upon them a defiant look, which made them feel rather uncomfortable for the time.

There is no doubt that Nancy Carmichael magnified her office, and not only so; but she was altogether wanting in consideration for the feelings of others.

We related, on a former occasion, how the time which she always took for replenishing the stoves was during the first prayer, when she would make a mighty clatter with poker, tongs, and zinc bucket. She had, also, a habit of winding up the clock—which hung on the back wall, opposite the pulpit—during sermon time—her memory often failing her on Saturday nights. Those who sat in the back pews were accustomed to see her coming in with her step-ladder, which she placed in the most convenient position, irrespective of knees and feet of the worshippers. Then she would slowly ascend to her work, wind the clock, set the hands, and bustle out as she had come.

On rare occasions, Nancy appeared in a comparatively amiable mood, an indication of which being the clasping of her hands behind her back. At such times, on or about commencement of sermon, when all had been put to rights about the door and porch, Nancy would walk slowly up the aisle in this fashion; at times even bestowing a not unkindly glance on the assembled congregation (always excepting members of committee), then she would drop into a seat near to the pulpit, and listen to the discourse, or part of it, with great attention.

She was obliged to resume her place in the porch before the pronouncement of the benediction, in order to make sure that there was not much unseemly jostling amongst the boys in their eagerness to get away.

It was by no means unusual to see her catch hold of a youth displaying more eagerness than good breeding, bestow upon him a sound box on the ear, and detain him until the very last of the people had got outside the door.

Indeed, it was the constant watchfulness required over the youthful members of the flock that, in great part, accounted for Nancy's being so seldom found amongst the worshippers in the pews.

Her absence about the door was often taken advantage of; as, on the memorable occasion on which Johnnie Glenn's young grandson—the same that was on the deputation who visited Miss Hopkins during her illness—left his seat to get a drink from the "can-fu'" of water which always sat in the porch; and, catching sight of a large sow which had broken into the green, and was "hoking" amongst the graves, must needs give the animal chase, ending up by getting astride her back.

The sow, rendered half mad by the unusage of the feeling, tore off at full gallop, made straight for the open doors, and before anyone could prevent it, galloped right round the aisles, in front of the pulpit, and out again to the green, young Glenn holding on with might and main.

We were so accustomed to unforeseen occurrences while at worship in the meeting-house that it was not easy to discompose us; but this escapade was too much for most—even Mr. M'Allister stopped in his discourse, took off his spectacles, and wiped them on his silk handkerchief.

"Scobes," always excitable, swooned right off, but was momentarily lost sight of in the tumult.

Nancy's face looked terribly severe as she slowly marched round the aisles afterwards to see that order had been restored, throwing a tinful of water over "Scobes's" face as she passed by.

.

When any special meetings were to be held, it was always wise to consult Nancy first. If we were so fortunate as to get her on our side, all was well; if not, there was the risk

of finding the doors and gates securely locked, entailing the postponement of the meeting.

Occasional soirees were held in the meeting-house, there being no lecture-hall or school-room; and at such times, if Nancy had been properly consulted, she made herself most useful by her faculty for keeping order.

Her voice was of the masculine type, and could be heard distinctly above all the babel of sound on such an occasion.

During the entertainment on the night on which the "new man" was ordained, Nancy had a hard task in endeavouring to see that everything was done decently and in order.

At one time, hearing the clatter and jingle of cups and teaspoons, and fancying that a commencement was about to be made, without the invocation of a blessing, the old woman forced her way through the throng, mounted the platform, on which the neighbouring clergy and friends from a distance were seated around a special table, and bawled out, in stentorian tones:

"Let the weemin' dae naethin' tae they'r bid!

"A' say, lass! dae ye hear what a'm sayin'?" (This to the doctor's daughter, who had let fall a spoon.)

Quietness having been restored, and an impressive grace having been said by a neighbouring clergyman, Nancy roared out:

"Noo, ye divils ye; at it ye go!"

This was the memorable occasion on which "Scobes" distinguished himself by remarking: "*A' had saxteen cups o' tay, wi' a roon' o' breed tae ivery yin, an' cud' a' got ma fill had a' taen't.*"



THEOLOGY AT THE LINT DAM.



Chapter XIII.

THEOLOGY AT THE LINT DAM.

IT was lint-spreading time at Andy Semple's. Though the weather was "bruckle" (brittle) there were no such drenching wet days as often came at that season of the year. This particular day which we have in our mind's eye was of the most delightful type to be met with in late August—morning somewhat hazy, the sun bursting forth at mid-day, and shining in all the glory of his fulness throughout the afternoon.

Andy and two neighbours were on duty at the lint dam, working hard and constant in order to keep supplied the little army of spreaders in the adjoining fields.

Dannie M'Cartney had come to give a helping hand in return for Andy's accustomed friendliness during the spring. Dannie, being

"gien near dune," was on the bank catching the streaming "beets" from the thrower-out, Tam Junkin (Jenkins), who stood over the knees in the water. Andy himself forked the beets on to the cart.

Tam Junkin's bad management had brought him to this pass, that he was glad to hire himself out to the neighbours—he who had once been an employer of labour himself.

Tam was a light-hearted creature, however, making the best of the change of circumstances, and was, on the whole, more contented thus doing his day's work, and pocketing his earnings on Saturday nights, than when in the possession of the farm, with all its responsibilities, he found himself getting further involved every year.

The neighbours did their utmost to save his feelings as much as possible when engaging his services, leading him, as it were, to imagine that he was in some sort conferring a favour by agreeing to lend them a hand at a busy time.

Andy Semple, for instance, would meet him on the road on an evening, and, after the discussion of some generalities, would say, as if the result of an afterthought:

"If ye think ye cud' spare's a day or twa,

Tam, frae ye'r ain wark" (Tam still possessed a garden), "we wud' be vera gled o' ye'r help at the lint-spreedin'—that's if ye wudna' min' geein' a han' tae a niber."

Then, on Saturday night, Andy would never think of paying Tam along with the other workers; but, keeping a sharp eye on him that he did not get away, he would remark:

"A' wud' like tae speak tae ye, Tam, fur a meenit efter the ithers gang awa'. It's tae consult ye aboot a coo 'at a'm no' shair if a shud' sell noo, 'at she wants a quarter o' bin' fat, or if it wudna' be better to fatten 'er a' oot."

After strolling about amongst the stock, and having considerable interchange of ideas on various agricultural subjects, Andy would say, just as Tam was getting over the stile:

"A' wus near han' forgettin', Tam—a' happen tae hae a pun'-note here 'at a' hae nae perteekler use fur—ye may as weel tak' it. A' dinna' ken what's 'atween us, bit we can square agen.

"Ye'll maybe luck ower nixt week, an' gee's a han' wi' th' h'y pittin' in, if ye'r no' ower busy."

"Weel, a'll tak' the note, Andy, that's if ye dinna' want it yersel'; bit it's far ower much."

.

"Thon [yon] wus a g'y big moothfu' o' a

word 'at the strange meenister cam' oot wi' on Sabbath," said Tam, on this particular morning, at the lint dam.

"What wus' 't—a' didna' hear't, 'at 'a ken o'."

"Man, a' thocht naebody miss't it; maybe ye wur' sleepin'."

"A' micht a bin noddin' fur a minute or twa—the meetin'-hoose wus warm. What wus the word?"

"Meetapheesics."

"It wus a big yin'. Did 'e tell the meanin' o't?"

"No; a' suppose 'e thocht we'd a' bin at cooledge a saission or twa, or it may be he didna' ken't 'imsel'."

"It'll be a maedical term," said Andy.

"They say no'. A' wus thinkin' that masel'."

"'Fractions' wud' ken't. Did ye try him?"

"A' did. He say'd it micht mean onythin'."

"It's a poser," said Andy, "no' a doot o't."

"A' ken the meanin' o' the word masel', an' a'm nether meenister nor schael-mester," said Dannie M'Cartney, speaking for the first time.

"A'm shuir ye dinna' ken't," pursued Tam, pitching up the dripping beets with great vigour. "If ye dae, what is't?"

"Oh, ay—what is't?—ye wud' like tae hear't; bit ye say'd a' didna' ken't."

"A' say so still, an' so dis Andy."

"Weel, boys," Andy broke in, fearing the discussion might grow hot between Tam and Dannie, "a'll tell ye the biggest word iver a' hard o', an' a' happen tae ken the meanin' o' it tae."

"Let's hear your yin, Andy," came from the dam.

"A' wull, on yin condeetion."

"What's that?"

"'At Dannie tells the meanin' o' his" (with a sly wink at Tam).

"On ye go then," Dannie replied—"it's a bargain—gae's yours first."

"Trans-sub-stanchy-ation—that's maybe no' a big yin?—a' retherly think it bates the ither."

Tam came to a full stop, lifting his straw hat, and drawing his sleeve across his streaming forehead.

"An' what's the intarpretation o' that, Andy?" said Dan; "it's mair like a sentence nor a word."

"It's connecket' wi' gremmer. Din't ye min' we used to larn aboot sub-stansive nouns an' verbs?"

"Ye'r younger nor me, Andy—thir wur' nae sic' things in my day."

"An' noo, what aboot meetapheesics, Dan?"

"It means—tae pit it in a nit-shell—*a man talkin' o' what he knows naethin' aboot.*

"Yin says 'at the yirth [earth] gaes roon' the sin [sun], an' anither 'at the sin gaes roon' the yirth, bit hoo dae they ken? Ye wud' think they saw't a' afore them like a cart-wheel. They'll wriggle an' wrangle es tae the difference o' a wheen meelion miles 'atween yin plainet an' anither, or maybe spen' a year in tryin' tae gauge the rate o' speed o' a shootin' star."

"Fur my pert," said Andy, "a'm o' the auld-fashioned kin', an' jist beleeve 'at a' thir things—sin, mune, an' stars—wur' set in their places tae shed licht on the yirth, an' a' think a' hae Scriptur' tae back me."

"Bit, for God sake, Andy," said Tam from the dam, "whativer ye may think, keep it tae yersel', or ye may pit some o' the budies oot o' a w'y o' earnin' a leevin'; an', efter a', they dae little herm, sae lang's they keep tae things sae far aff.

"A'm thinkin' the craturs wud' mak' bit a puir shape at stannin' ower the knees in spring water a' day, throwin' glitty lint oot o' a dam."

"Weel, boys," said Andy, "big words is poozlin' enough, bit whun they'r coupl't wi' big doctrines, they'r still mair sae.

"There's pre-destination—a g'y stiff proob-lem, an' yin 'at hes caus't me mony an anxious thocht."

(Anyone could have guessed what the foregoing would lead up to. The discussion concerning big words was merely a prelude to more serious controversy.)

"Fur exemple," continued Andy, "if a'm foreordain't (it's a' the same) frae a' eternity tae be lost, whativer's the use o' ma tryin' tae be save't; an' yit there's the 'whosoever wull.'"

"Ay," said Dannie, "it's mystarious, nae doot; bit ye may jist as weel tak' it on ye tae say 'at if ye hae bin ordain't tae be save't, whor's the need o' takin' ony trouble tae avoid faain' intae sin; an' yit Paul compares the Christian life tae rinnin' a race."

"My opeenion is" (this from the dam) "'at the doctrine's like what 'Fractions' say'd aboot 'meetapheesics'—it micht mean onythin'."

"No, Tam," said Andy, "we'll no' agree wi' ye in that—there's naethin' in God's word 'at hesna' its correck' meanin' an' use, tho' some things are hard tae unnerstan'.

"O' coorse we manna lee oot 'free wull,' whuch hes a lock tae dae wi' sic' a doctrine es this, seein' it hes bin the law frae the

vera first; bit ower an' abune that, there's a heap 'at's vera confleectin'."

"Ay, fur nae man can come unless the Faither draws 'im," said Dan.

"Hoo-an'-iver, a' hae hear'd Mister M'Allister aften say 'at what's gee'n him much comfort whun thinkin' o' thae things, wus the vera fac' 'at 'e wus thinkin' aboot them at a'.

"In ither words, he wud' say he feel'd sure 'at them 'at wusna' elecke't wus niver troubled wi' doots on the metter; bit yinst a man's anxious in 'is ain min', it's a true sign 'at the speerit's workin' in 'im, an' he needna' despair."

"Ay, man," replied Andy, "there's a hale lump o' comfort in that; fur it wud' be a sort o' a contradeection in Divine laws wur' folk made anxious aboot their state, while at the same time there wus nae hope fur them.

"An', on the ither han', whun we luck roon' us at some folk 'at we ken, we canna' help comin' tae the conclusion 'at their consciences ir' clean deid, if iver they had sic' things ava'."

"God kens *a'm* far frae what a' shud' be," said Tam from the dam; "bit a' the same, mony a guid tussle a' hae wi' ma conscience, if there's ony comfort in that.

"A' whiles think 'at if a cud' only owercome the cravin' fur a drap o' drink, a' wudna' hae much bother wi' onythin' else; an' mony a resolve a' mak'—sometimes on ma knees—bit a' go ootside an' meet yin an' anither, an' the guid resolves melt awa' like snaw aff a dyke."

"A'm only ower easy led awa' mysel', Tam," said Andy; "tho' wi' me it seldom gangs ayont twa-three half-yins on a fair or market day; bit a' aften despise masel' a' the same."

"You an' Tam shud' baith tak' the plaidge, Andy," said Dannie. "Es fur me, at my time o' life, a'm dootin' ony change a' micht mak' in that w'y wud' dae me harm instead of guid, an' a'm no' likely tae get much waur.

"A' hae drunk a heap in ma day, an' if a' had ma life tae lead ower agen a' wud' act vera different; bit, noo, the half-yin or twa 'at a' manage to get amang han's, goes a lang w'y in keepin' me up."

"Weel, Dannie," Andy made answer, "ye think ye'r no' es bad es me, an' a' think a'm no' es bad es Tam; an' it may be 'at Tam's o' opeenion 'at he's no' es bad es somebody else; bit there's yin thing we're agreed on, an' that is, 'at we wud' a' hae bin better, baith in conscience an' pocket, 'athoot the whusky.

"Fur ma ain pert, a' hae got comfort frae what Dannie says, or, retherly Mister M'Allister, aboot an active conscience bin' a sign 'at we're no' ootside the pale o' grace.

"Altho' a' didna' hear the strange meenister on Sabbath comin' oot wi' the big word 'meetapheesics,' a' weel min' the geest o' 'is discoorse, whuch wus—'at faith 'athoot works es jist o' es little accoont es works 'athoot faith; bit 'at baith thegither dae the wark, like twa horses in a pu' [plough] drawin' the same w'y.

"Noo, if Tam 'll join me, here an' noo, a'll endeevour tae show my faith bi' ma works, an' a'll tak' the plaidge, es Dannie says, an' keep it tae, wi' God's help. Wull ye join me, Tam?"

"It's no' sae hard fur you, Andy, 'at hae nae great eenclination, except bin' led b' a freen', yinst in a while, on a market day; bit if ye only ken't what it wus tae feel the cravin'—the druth—the *hell fire*—a' can ca' it naethin' else—a' tell ye, men, ma senses ir' es active es ony o' yours, an' a'm no' blin' tae the fac' 'at a'm gan' lower an' lower doon the hill. Ma hoose an' ferm's gone, an', what's waur, the wife 'at trusted me; an' the weans, 'at shud' luck tae me fur an exemple, ir' bin' brocht doon alang wi' me; an' yit, *there's times 'at if it wus tae save*

them a' frae starvation, or worse, a' cudna' reseest the spennin' o' ma last saxpence in drink."

"An' yit," said Andy, "'His grace is suffeecient'; an' naebody iver gaed tae Him fur help, an' wus turn't empy awa'."

"A' tell ye, freens, a'm an aul' man noo" (it was Dannie who spoke), "an' it lucks fael-like, on my pert, takin' on wi' new-fang'll'd notions; bit here's ma han', Andy, a'll sign ma name on the bit kerd, alow yours, if Tam 'll consent tae dae the same."

A stranger arriving on the scene at that moment would have been mystified.

Andy's back was turned to Dannie, and Dannie's to Andy, while Tam was turned right away from both; and such blowing of noses, clearing of throats, and other queer sounds—very much resembling sobs—the said stranger would have been puzzled to have made it all out.

The resolves made on the bank of the lint-dam held good in other places.

Tam and his wife, in the course of time, by good management, were able to rent another farm, smaller, of course, than the last; but they grew to be independent, lived happy, died respected, and surrounded by a sorrowing and affectionate family.





A VILLAGE CELEBRITY.



Chapter XIV.

A VILLAGE CELEBRITY.

"SCOBES" lived by himself—not in lodgings (he was too independent for that), but in a rented house.

A stranger to the village would have had some difficulty in finding his abode. Of course, it was not on the main street; neither was it on the back street nor the back road, which ran between the Mill Lane and the Dully Hole. Neither was it in the Cadger's Close, the Water Raw, the Dandy Raw, nor in M'Cappin's Place—a hole for which had been dug—the roofs of the houses being almost on a level with the street, or perhaps the road was banked up above the houses at the time when the Brig was built, for before that time the river ran across the street—horses and vehicles fording it, when floods were not too high—a row of

stepping-stones being laid for the convenience of pedestrians going from the "laigh toon" to the upper.

There were other streets or lanes—the Pun' (Pound) Raw, Meetin'-hoose Close, and the Fair Hill; but "Scobes's" dwelling did not grace any of these. His house stood by itself on a waste piece of ground, a little to the right of the Tullyshane Road, nearly opposite to where the Tildree and Gateside roads branch off, and within a stone-throw of the Covenanting Meeting-house. The least risky time to visit "Scobes" in his own home was by daylight; and even then one had to proceed with caution, in order to avoid going over the ankles in mud-holes.

In places where the ground was unusually leaky, a large stone or two had been thrown in, or an odd barrowful of cinders.

The house did not possess a window; but, as a substitute, a hole had been left in the wall, at right-hand side of hall door, in case the luxury should be at any time required.

In the summer, this hole remained open for ventilating purposes; in cold weather, "Scobes" stuffed it with an old coat or a wisp of straw. The old man, as we know, was fond of straw,

a bundle of which always came in useful for the renewing of the ropes which he constantly wore round his legs and waist, or for the replenishing of his humble bed.

On entering the doorway on one of "Scobes's" "at-home" days, the visitor had to pause for a moment before being able to distinguish anything in the semi-darkness of the place, rendered darker still by the smoke, which preferred lingering about the rafters to going out as it should through the hole in the roof.

There was, as may be expected, but one apartment, which did duty for kitchen, reception-room, and sleeping-room.

Once accustomed to the dim light, the visitor became aware that his comfort had not been altogether overlooked; for there were several large flat stones placed in irregular fashion over the floor, just as we, in these days, distribute gossip chairs through our drawing-rooms. "Scobes" was more consistent in his taste, for his seats were all of the same colour.

In the far corner, opposite the fire, was a bed, consisting of an old mattress laid on the floor, and covered by a dark patch-work quilt, of uninviting appearance; a few rude cooking utensils completed the furnishing of the apart-

ment. The man's wants were simple; and having no one dependent on him, nor any immediate relatives, he had not much inducement to gather together possessions.

"Scobes" received visitors at his own house in a royal manner, dusting the stones for guests to sit on, and insisting on their partaking of refreshments — perhaps potatoes roasting on the embers. Generally the visitors begged to be excused.

There was a spark of gentility about the man. He was most courteous, conducting his visitors out with much ceremony when they rose to go, and stoutly refusing an offered gratuity until he had reached the outside of his own door, when he would take it, not feeling in the same way compromised.

Although living in such an unpretentious abode, "Scobes," being of a naturally imitative disposition, went through some formalities, such as he witnessed among the better classes. For example, once every year he had a regular house-cleaning, when he would bring all his effects to the outside, and go through an exhaustive process of dusting and cleaning.

He had no carpets to beat; but he threshed the ancient quilt and mattress thoroughly,

leaving everything open to the sun and air for a whole day, when they would be restored to their places, to remain undisturbed for another year.

This leads us to relate the story of another and more laughable case of exercise of the imitative faculty. On this occasion his character nearly received such a stigma as would have damaged his reputation permanently in the village, had he not been so well known and universally trusted.

Visitors from Scotland arrived unexpectedly at the Lowrys'. Liza happened to be at home, being on the "night-shift" that week, and on "Scobes" dropping in, as usual, to light his pipe, Liza gave him a shilling, requesting him to go to Jean Kelly's shop, at the Brig, for a quarter pound of bacon, three eggs, two baps, and half a pound of No. 20 candles; bring all back, and the change, as fast as his legs could carry him.

The man was generally attentive and prompt on such occasions; but this time he was slow about coming back; and, after waiting for an hour, Liza went in search of him.

He had not called at Jean Kelly's, but had been seen hurrying towards his own house. Liza followed him there, only to find the door closed,

and barred on the inside. Knocking loudly for some minutes, she at last heard the old man's voice calling out: "Wha's there?"

"It's me, 'Scobes.' What aboot the bacon, eggs, baps, an' cannels a' sent ye fur, an' the change? Is onythin' wrang, man?"

"Ay, there's plenty wrang, Liza. Ye may gang awa' hame; ye'll get nether the stuff nor the money, for *a' hae fail't*. Din't ye see, wummin, ma shap's shut?—bit a'll dae better a wee noo."

The "natural" had heard some talk about recent failures in the neighbourhood, and how that some individuals, after remaining for a time with closed doors, had re-commenced business afresh, under flourishing auspices, sometimes even moving into a larger house, and keeping an extra servant.

By dint of a little reasoning, Liza got back her money.

We were all familiar with the old man's odd sayings and harmless remarks, and were wont to humour him when he tried to make us feel small by his witty sallies.

"Did ye hear, man, 'at the mill-dam's on fire?"

"No, 'Scobes'; you are surely jesting. How did it happen?"

"Wull Tamson throwed in an airmfu' o' bleezin' stray" (straw).

He laughed unmercifully at our confusion and looks of blank astonishment.

"Is there onythin' in the papers aboot a man-o'-war ship's gan' doon, wi' a' on boord?"

"Nothing at all. Has such a thing happened?"

"She gaed doon, richt eneugh—*doon the lough.*"

Uplifted with the success of the "sell," he would pop his head over a dozen half-doors, on his way up the street, giving the people away in the same fashion, and looking on himself as a very clever old man, indeed.

"Man, *it's a sair peety to hear ye tellin' lees on the deid!*" was what he was in the habit of saying to an energetic herring merchant, as he listened to him enlarging on the freshness of his stock.

Had not Johnnie Glenn been a more than ordinarily good-natured man, he would have retaliated on "Scobes" on the day on which that worthy rushed into his shop, exclaiming in an excited manner:

"Johnnie, man, ye'r best coo's a-chokin'!" (Johnnie had added on the milk trade to his numerous other occupations). Hurrying after

"Scobes," what was his surprise, when the "natural" pointed him to the pump, into the mouth of which he had squeezed a turnip.

Perhaps one of the most amusing incidents connected with the odd creature's residence amongst us, was an encounter he had with a Salvation Army officer, who asked him to buy a copy of the *War Cry*.

"What'n a war's gan' on noo?" said "Scobes."

"The great war between the world and the devil."

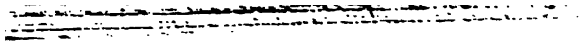
"A' niver hard o't. Hoo lang hae they bin fechtin'?"

"Many thousands of years—since the beginning of time."

"Dear man!—*they mun a' bin weel matched*."



"SCOBES'S" LOVE STORY.



Chapter XV.

"SCOBES'S" LOVE STORY.

"SCOBES" had not always been the gruesome-looking, half-witted individual which he has been presented. Many were the stories circulated regarding his pedigree and early days; but most of these were, in great part, imaginary, or much exaggerated. Some would have it that he was of gentle birth, and closely related to the family of the Marquis: this, no doubt, from the fact of his surname (Blake) being the same. Others, that he had been an extensive merchant in the city, and that his affairs having gone wrong, so preyed on his mind as to seriously interfere with his reason.

Liza Lowry's mother, and some of the older residents knew his true history; had, in fact, been acquainted with him from his youth.

He had certainly been for a considerable time about the Castle; but it was in the capacity of under-gardener; and it was owing to the course of a certain love affair not having run smoothly that his mind had become unhinged.

Asylums for the insane were not so common in those days as now; consequently the man's liberty was not interfered with; but, for a time, his movements required pretty close surveillance, and the straight waist-coat was more than once spoken about, when all milder remedies had failed.

He was always afraid of Mr. M'Allister, although, of course, he never had received anything but kindness from his hands; but the minister, while gentle in manner, had an amount of firmness in his disposition which had a salutary influence on the "natural."

On one occasion this wholesome fear of the minister was the means of almost cutting short poor "Scobes's" career. He had been guilty of some improper conduct to one of the villagers, who threatened to report the matter to Mr. M'Allister; and the very next day, "Scobes" being on the Mill Road, and seeing the minister in the distance, squeezed himself into the mouth of a drain-pipe, from which he was only rescued

with considerable difficulty, and in a most exhausted condition.

As Widow Lowry and others remembered Joe Blake at the Castle, he was a fine-looking, intelligent, handy man. The girl who had won his heart was a housemaid from the city, whose pretty face and soft speech had completely overcome the honest gardener, rendering him her devoted slave.

For a time the girl appeared to favour his attentions. They had occasional meetings and walks together, and it was easy to be seen that Blake was deeply in love.

On a certain May fair day the couple obtained a holiday, and spent a delightfully happy day at the fair, patronizing the show, the merry-go-rounds, and other amusements; had their fortunes told, their likenesses taken, and had feasted on lemonade and gingerbread. Blake never forgot that walk home, in the quiet evening, along the by-roads and the hawthorn-scented lanes. He thought he had never seen his sweetheart look so pretty. They plighted their troth over a running stream—breaking a fi'penny-piece, and each keeping half.

Joe felt as if the whole world was rejoicing in his good fortune—even the birds seemed to sing

more sweetly, as they watched the lovers from their perches high up among the branches of the trees.

The marriage was arranged to take place in November—Joe occupying the intervening time by looking for a cottage, furnishing it, and putting the garden in order; taking his sweetheart every evening to witness the progress that had been made.

Towards the end of summer, the girl's manner seemed to have somewhat changed, causing her lover some anxiety. However, love is blind, and Joe tried to convince himself that his Letty was merely feeling a natural concern, owing to the important step she was about to take.

The harvest-home at the Castle was celebrated towards the latter end of October, and among the guests was a young man from the city, whom none knew but Letty. She introduced him as an old acquaintance, and Joe was pained to observe that she danced with the stranger so much as to attract the notice of the people present.

Once Joe ventured gently to chide the girl for refusing to dance with him, she having promised the dance to the stranger, when she

fired up, informing him that she was not tied to him yet, and meant to enjoy her liberty while she had it.

Poor Joe tried to make excuses for her, although his heart was sore. He strove to comfort himself with the thought that in less than a fortnight's time the beautiful girl would be his very own.

How his heart bounded as he pictured to himself the cottage already beginning to look quite homely, with his sweetheart to welcome him with smiles and open arms as he came from his work in the evenings; then his heart sank again, and unholy feelings took possession of him, as, on looking round the hall, he missed the form of his dear one; and, on inquiring, found that she had gone for a walk with the stranger. Only for this man's unfortunate presence at the feast, Joe Blake's happiness would have been complete.

The ball ended as daylight was appearing in the east, and Joe was rewarded by having his sweetheart to himself for a whole half-hour, in the garden, before the bustle of the day commenced.

The girl quitted the Castle for good during the day, in order, as she said, to spend the

week before her marriage with her friends in the city, and make final preparations for the event.

Joe walked with her almost half the way; and when the time for parting came, the poor fellow completely broke down, although trying to comfort himself with the thought that the separation was only for a few days, and when next they met—he and his beloved—it would be at the altar.

Letty appeared affectionate enough—vowed she would break her heart, only for the amount of work she would have to accomplish. They kissed and parted, with many fond injunctions, but on his way back Joe's heart felt heavy as lead.

How dreary would be the servant's hall at the Castle without the form of his darling—flitting about and making sunshine wherever she went. He could see, in fancy, the others—could hear their jests and gay chatter—could even forestall the sallies directed at himself; but one face would be absent, and that face meant all the world to him.

The days passed somehow; he received but one letter—it was a short one—and contained little but a few generalities. Joe thought she

might have spent half an hour in writing a longer letter. He had sat, spread over the kitchen table, for the greater part of a night, engaged in the painful operation of writing to her—for writing *was* painful work to Joe, and his tongue *would* insist on coming outside his mouth, and forming imaginary characters to correspond with those produced by the pen. The letter had given her a detailed account of all that had gone on of interest since she left, and was filled with protestations and loving words.

However, Joe, as usual, was ready to make excuses for her; she had, no doubt, much to occupy her time, and, as they were so soon to be united, did not think long letters necessary.

The wedding morning dawned at last. Joe was up with the lark—in fact he might as well have never gone to bed. He felt as if treading on air, and caught himself wondering how the slow hours would pass till the arrival of his beloved at the village church. On rising from a mere pretence of breakfast, the postman came in with the letters, and there was amongst them one for him; it was in her handwriting. A mist came over his eyes—could she be ill?—but no! it had been posted

the day before—it was merely to remind him of the hour of her arrival, or some other detail. Still his hand trembled, so that he could scarcely break the seal.

This is what he read:

"When you receive this, I shall have been married, and on my way to Dublin, from where we sail to Liverpool, and thence to America. My husband is the man whom you were jealous of at the harvest-home. He was my intended before I went to the Castle, but we had a fall out. I went to the Castle, met you—and you know the rest.

"I always loved Alfred, although, had he not come after me, I would have married you, *just to spite him.* I am sure you will forgive me: you will feel bad for a day or two; but cheer up, Joe, some other girl will make you happier than ever I could.

"Good-bye; don't think too hardly of yours no more,

"LETITIA STEEL."

Joe did not "cheer up." He made no great fuss, however, when he had finished the reading of the letter; he just turned on his heel, walked out, and was not seen or heard of for three days. Where he had spent the time, or how, was never clearly known; but he had evidently slept out in the woods; for, when at last found, he was already in the grip of a high fever.

The fever reached the brain; and when, after weeks of suffering, the poor wreck of what had been so fine a fellow left his bed, where he had received the best of nursing, his mind was almost a complete blank.

As we have seen, his movements required rather constant watchfulness for a time; but with advancing years, the fire began to burn down, and for over a quarter of a century he had gone in and out amongst us as harmless as a child.

During the last few years of his life he grew addicted to fits of wandering, sometimes disappearing for days; and the exposure thus endured must have considerably hastened on the end.

On a certain wild, wet February day the old man missed his way, when a good five miles distant from the village; darkness came on, and he asked at many doors for shelter from the storm, but no one would allow him even into their byre or barn. At length, almost in despair, he knocked at the door of a humble cottage, in which dwelt two unmarried sisters, who looked with pity on the wasted, forlorn, drenched figure of the demented creature, and consented to allow him to occupy the

loft, which came half-way over their small kitchen and sleeping-room, on condition that they would remove the ladder when he ascended.

They gave him a warm supper, and hung his bedraggled rags before the fire to dry. Truly, good Samaritans were they, and their humane act was registered in heaven as against the heartless conduct of those who had driven Christ from their doors—for that is what they did.

Think of these two defenceless women, living in an obscure cottage, in a lonely neighbourhood, consenting to shelter and feed such a fearsome object as the poor "natural" presented, because they could not allow one of God's creatures to perish in the storm!

During the night, the old man's voice was heard in incoherent ramblings. He seemed restless and ill at ease; but as morning approached, he became quiet, and the sisters supposed he had dropped over asleep.

As the morning advanced towards noon, and still no sound came from the attic, the women became alarmed, and summoned the nearest neighbour, who, on going up, found the old man sleeping the sleep of death. All appearances

pointed to his having passed away in perfect peace.

Sewed inside the lining of his ragged waistcoat—a shirt he did not possess—was a small packet, which, on being opened, was found to contain a letter—*that* letter—a lock of golden hair, the faded photograph of a beautiful girl, and *the discoloured half of a broken fi'penny*.



"'TWIXT THE CUP AND THE LIP."



Chapter XVI.

"'TWIXT THE CUP AND THE LIP."

"FRACTIONS," at certain times, gave himself up to quite an exuberance of good humour—almost amounting to hilarity. His hearty manner and beaming face proved absolutely infectious, the whole school ringing out with cheerful sounds as from a smith's anvil.

Atmospheric elevation exercised, no doubt, a telling influence on the master, as did also physical and domestic causes—(women's tongues are bound to have a holiday some times, if only for the purpose of re-invigoration)—and while the spell lasted, "Fractions" was really a lovable man, working up the school to the highest level of good-will, and causing it to forget, for the time, that such things existed as hard names, birch rods, or broken heads.

"Noo, like good boys, get at ye'r lessons, fur a' hae hope o' some o' ye yit. There's nae quaestion bit ye hae brains, if ye wud' only gee's the chance o' shakin' them up.

"Come alang noo, an' see hoo pat ye can repeat the names o' the coonties o' Ulster.

"Fur the purpose o' fixing them on ye'r memories, we'll see if we can turn them intae some sort o' rhyme. A'thegether noo, ma boys, like sodgers crossin' a brig.

"Donegall, Londonderry, Antrim, Down—
Ye'r the makin' o' men o' great renown."

(The chorus of voices was almost deafening.)

"Armagh, Monaghan, Tyrone—
Show 'at ye hae some back bone."

(The response was given screamingly.)

"Fermanagh an' Cavan—
They'r har'ly worth havin'."

It was surprising how quickly the dullest intellect mastered the lesson in this way.

Even prosaic grammar was rendered quite captivating, and rattled off merrily as a marriage bell:

"Indicative mood—min' Robin Hood.
Possessive case—go wash ye'r face.
Second person—wee Tam M'Pherson.
Plural number—Tam's heid's like timber."

Which raised a laugh so loud and uproarious at Tam's expense, that it developed into a cheer, and was within a narrow shave of becoming riotous; but the master held up a warning finger, and the tumult gradually subsided.

"Thanks be tae the Almichty, boys, 'at the spring's come roon' agen, an' the sun's shinin' an' the birds singin'; an' what'n health we hae tae enjoy it a', an' hoo happy we micht a' be, if ye wud' bit settle doon tae learn ye'r lessons an' be guid boys. A' firmly believe a'll hae credit wi' a wheen o' ye yit.

"Professor Tam Forsythe hadna' a better chance nor the rest o' ye—in fac' waur nor maist—fur he had tae help his fether tae deleever the letters ivery mornin', es weel es carry the breed-basket fur the baker; bit Tam hed brains, an' it wus lucky he cam' tae me, fur a' kent hoo tae shape them."

"Three cheers fur Tam Forsythe!" some boy shouted, and the ringing cheers pealed forth heartily.

"Three mair fur the mester!" another voice piped, and this time the noise and tumult could hardly be suppressed.

"Fractions," though highly pleased, again felt it his duty to hold up a warning finger.

Under such favourable circumstances, it was only natural that wise young heads should be put together, and opinions interchanged as to what and how much could be gained from the master while this fit of good-humour lasted.

A half-holiday was discussed; but the May fair was approaching, and it was deemed wiser policy to reserve the application till that time.

A "battle" was always enjoyable; but the last engagement had taken place only a week previous, which had developed into a physical contest outside the school, and continued every afternoon for four days; consequently, heads and knuckles were just beginning to heal, and eyes which had been thrown into mourning had reached the green stage preparatory to assuming their natural colour.

The unanimous resolution of the conference, after lengthy debate, was in favour of "broth"; and, accordingly, a deputation was duly appointed to wait on "Fractions" and bring back an answer.

"Fractions," it must be admitted, was not much in favour of this form of indulgence, which had proved inexpedient more than once; and, under ordinary circumstances, would have set his face rigorously against it; but, on casting

his eye over the clamorous squad—many of them looking hungry enough—a smile appeared in his grey eyes, under the glasses, and slowly crept down his face till it reached the mouth, and the good man felt he had completely given himself away.

The school waited for no more; but, amid much noise and disorder, set about making preliminary arrangements for the feast.

One boy was told off to Sally M'Croit's lodging-house to borrow a large pot. Another undertook the collection of a variety of vegetables, while a third was despatched on the quest of crockery-ware and horn spoons. "Fractions" himself generously subscribed twopence-halfpenny for the purchase of a mutton bone. The fire was built up; the pot, with its ingredients, set on; and soon a savoury smell began to pervade the school-room.

Anything further in the way of learning was not to be thought of for this day. Excitement and expectation were intense, and it was quite as much as the master could do to restrain his flock from making inroads on the "broth" long before it was ready for use.

"Fractions" reserved to himself the right of judgment concerning the perfection of his

cookery, although many spoons were dipped into the pot, and, as may be supposed, there was much sampling and smacking of lips.

By one o'clock the "broth" was pronounced to be properly cooked. "Fractions" again drew on his purse for the price of a 4-lb. loaf, which he dexterously cut into squares with the same jack-knife which he had used for the mincing of the vegetables.

The master's good-humour and patience were taxed to the uttermost limit by the jostling and clamour of the noisy crew in their efforts to get early "helps" from the big pot, which now sat steaming on the hearth-stone.

The homely ladle was conspicuous by its absence, necessitating "Fractions" to portion out the savoury liquid with a cup, stirring it up occasionally with his ruler.

Ten minutes' active service had a telling effect on the school. Nearly every applicant had been supplied; and what between substantial mouthfuls of bread and spoonfuls of piping hot "broth," the enjoyment of the scholars was complete.

"Fractions," hot and perspiring, had just managed to scrape up for himself half a mug-ful from the bottom of the pot, and was in

the act of transferring the first spoonful to his mouth, when the school-room door opened, and the inspector, accompanied by Mr. M'Allister, walked in.

The inspector's visit was hardly meant to be official. He happened to be in the immediate neighbourhood, when recollecting his old friend, Mr. M'Allister, he could not resist the temptation to look him up. After partaking of lunch, and having a long chat over old times, the two decided to pay a short visit to the school.

Had a thunderbolt crashed through the roof, and fallen in their midst, it could not have caused more profound consternation and amazement to master and pupils alike.

Even the most collected of the scholars stayed the rapid progress of their spoons, and stared from the inspector to the clergyman, and from the clergyman to the master, with unfeigned astonishment, not unmixed with apprehension.

On ordinary occasions, when a crisis of any kind occurred in the noisy little world of the school-room, "Fractions" was generally the first to recover himself; but at this time he, for once, was completely non-plussed.

A half-frightened, half-defiant look came over his countenance as he glanced at his visitors; his mug in one hand and spoon in the other, while a thick wedge of bread lay in his lap.

Mr. M'Allister, taking in the situation at a glance, could have wished himself a hundred miles away. He endeavoured to stammer out some sort of apology as to having come in at an inopportune season; but the inspector's face wore a look of severity, and his words caused "Fractions" to quake.

"I shall feel bound, Mr. Graham, to make a note of this incident in my official report. In all my experience of schools, I have never come across a scene so degrading, or so contrary to rules."

"It wus b' way o' encouragement," the master ventured to explain in a trembling voice. "I——"

"You were warned on a previous occasion, when you took it upon yourself to close the school on the day of a certain race-meeting; and you also remember that the Board was apprised of your conduct in granting a two-days holiday at the time of the last May fair, reprimanding you for same.

"When this escapade is brought under its notice, all I can say is—I would not care to be in your shoes," with which remark the inspector turned on his heel and walked out, followed by the minister, leaving "Fractions" in a state of woeful consternation.

What passed between the inspector and Mr. M'Allister as they drove together to the station is, of course, only a matter of conjecture. Whether the inspector continued to express his indignation concerning the scene which had been witnessed, or whether the two friends indulged in a hearty laugh at the discomfiture and dumfounderment of the good old dominie, cannot be clearly known; this much, however, is certain, that before they parted the minister had exacted from his friend a promise that nothing would appear in his report concerning the feast.

"Since you put it so strong, Mr. M'Allister, I cannot very well refuse you; but, you see, a man in my position has a duty to perform, and feels, as it were, placed between two opposite forces—the desire to deal leniently with the teachers, and the obligation to act conscientiously with his employers."

"Lay the blame on me, Riddall, if any there be. As manager of the school, I will

have a word with the master, and will answer for it that no more broth-making will take place during school hours in future."

.

"The young rascals forced me intae the ploy sair against ma wull," "Fractions" explained to the minister that same evening as the two met on the brig; and a weight was lifted from the teacher's mind by the intimation that nothing would be heard of in Dublin concerning the day's experience.

"A'm fain tae try ony plan ava b' w'y o' encouragin' them tae learn; bit a'm maist unfortunate es tae results; fur a har'ly min' a time 'at a' gied them a holiday—if it shud' only bin an hour—'at the inspector didna' pounce in on me that vera day.

"It's no' a'thegether the quaestion o' the p'y 'at concerns me, fur a' micht b' able to leeve 'athoot that; bit the *pension*'s the thing a' hae bin luckin' forrad tae a' ma days, an' a' naturally wudna' like tae miss't.

"Ye see, a'm a first-o'-first man, an' tuk a better place in Dublin nor ony o' the common teachers roon' aboot; an' some o' them, a'm shair, wudna' b' sorry tae see me lose baith p'y an' pension; so it's that 'at makes me maist

anxious tae pit in ma time, an' secure that which a' hae work't sae hard tae gain."

"Well, Mr. Graham, I hope you will obtain your pension, and live long to enjoy it; but, in future, I am afraid you will have to endeavour to cultivate the young intellects irrespective of the cravings of their bodily appetites.

"I presume if your flock drank in learning with the same relish which they manifest for the 'broth,' you would be a happy man."

"If they did, ye'r reverence, *a' wudna' change ma lot wi' a Cabinet Minister.*"





ODDS AND ENDS.



Chapter XVII.

ODDS AND ENDS.

IT was a great day for the village, that on which Geordie Bell, bellows-mender and clock-cleaner, bought over the stock-in-trade of a travelling photographer, adding it on to his existing business, thereby making it possible for people to have their likenesses taken without the trouble and expense of going to the city.

Geordie was obliged to receive his clients in the back garden, no part of his house being available for a studio. The principal trade was, of course, done on market and fair days; and when any such days turned out wet, as was frequently the case, considerable disappointment was experienced by artist and sitters alike.

One hot summer day, as Geordie and his family were at dinner, the cow came home before her time in a rather excited state, knocked

down the apparatus, smashing the camera; and when discovered, the last corner of the dark cloth was disappearing in her mouth. Thus ended the artistic speculation.

No doubt this was a very great disappointment to Geordie; but compensations were near. Although married for a considerable number of years, no family had come to brighten his home; but, shortly after the disaster just recorded, his wife presented him with twins—two fine boys—and so delighted was the man, that he at once took down the old signboard, and erected a new one, bearing the inscription:

"GEORGE BELL & SONS."

There was just one other production in the village which caused the same amount of conjecture and difference of opinion as Geordie's specimen work, as exhibited in the show-case, which hung outside his door, and that was the reading matter issued from Abram Ridley's printing-press.

Abram carried on the printing, binding, bookselling, and general stationery business in all its branches; and, perhaps, it was due to his having personally to superintend the various departments that numerous omissions and odd mistakes were of frequent occurrence.

The printing-press stood in the kitchen, immediately behind the shop. Funeral cards being the principal orders with which Abram was entrusted, the leaving out of a letter, or the addition of same, was not considered an all-important matter, and people were contented if the wording came anything near to correctness, and was fairly intelligible; but the Lowrys considered themselves aggrieved at the time of Barbara's death, by the transposition of the figures denoting the deceased's age: 28 was the age given in, but 82 appeared on the card, which even exceeded the total of the days and years of the mother's life at that period.

On one occasion Abram started a weekly newspaper, which he modestly styled *The Athenæum, or, A Review of the World.* It enjoyed but a short existence; and errors similar to those connected with the funeral cards were, unfortunately, but too conspicuous.

In one issue there appeared an account of a local wedding, and also of an explosion at the mills, due to the carelessness of an overseer, and by which a number of work-people narrowly escaped serious injury. By some mischance the headings of the different paragraphs got misplaced—the one over the wedding notice

appearing as "A Horrible Blunder," and that denoting the catastrophe at the mill "An Auspicious Event."

Abram had tried authorship in his time, one of his productions being a pamphlet of a controversial nature on the subject of the true writer, or writers, of the Book of Isaiah.

In another work he strove to bring about a complete reconciliation between the science of his day and the teaching of Old Testament Scripture (this latter being in great part suggested by the writings of Hugh Miller); and some of Abram's ideas might have proved helpful to Professor Drummond of later times.

His last, and, perhaps, most important work was entitled "An Autobiography of Abram Ridley, Publisher, by Himself," in which were detailed numerous occurrences in his eventful life.

Though the price of these works never, in any instance, exceeded fourpence, and the author reviewed them most favourably in his own paper, *The Athenæum*, they met with but an indifferent reception—the villagers not being given to the spending of much money on literature.

Abram possessed a keen sense of injury, and was quick to resent an injustice. Once the

Banner of Ulster referred in a somewhat slighting manner to *The Athenæum*, and in the little organ's next issue there was this announcement:

"Our contemporary, the *Banner of Ulster*, has, we are delighted to observe, doubled its circulation of late—*another man now takes in the paper.*"

.

It was a wonder how the village shopkeepers managed to live so comfortably amidst their cramped, narrow surroundings, and the rigid economies which were so systematically practised. A farmer could not have bought even a scythe-stone without a hard fight for a discount on the price.

The weighing of paper bags and wrappers along with goods was so strenuously objected to, that it became absolutely necessary for the merchants to affix a corresponding modicum of sealing-wax to the bottom of the scale.

If a housewife were purchasing a few yards of cloth for the replenishing of the family wardrobe, she would wage a hard fight for the odd three-quarter yard at the end of the web to be thrown into the bargain. Rosey M'Cartney, on one occasion, demanded a pair of stockings from the leading draper to compensate for the

"cardings" which he took from a pair of blankets she was buying.

Even the drinking was done on the most economical principle. A couple of neighbours would sit for the greater part of a day in Johnnie Glenn's bar-parlour over two "treats," the net cost of which would be sixpence.

If a farmer required a new cart built, or any repairs executed about his premises, he was sure to procure the timber and all other materials at lowest cash prices from the city, and would use up any old timber that he had lying about, thereby limiting the tradesmen to a mere day's wage. The tailor and shoemaker were put on the same terms — good care being taken to prevent their having any chance of profit on materials.

No one found more difficulty in eking out a livelihood than the chimney-sweeper; a whin bush with a rope attached to it being found sufficient in most cases (Nancy Carmichael flew a goose up her chimney). We remember having seen Humphrey Barr thus cleaning his chimney on one occasion, and it must be admitted that he looked anything but like a professional; an old shirt being drawn over his clothes, his head and face completely enveloped

by a large cotton night-cap, with a huge tassel, as he manipulated the rope with great vigour.

.

"What's a' that chappin' aboot, Andy?" said Mrs. Semple on the night before her death.

"It's Wully Turner an' his man pittin' thegither the bit coofin."

"A' houp they'r no' usin' up ony o' the guid timmer," continued the dying woman—"there's plenty o' odd bits lyin' roon' aboot 'at wud' answer weel eneugh."

"They'r workin' up es much aul' stuff es they can mak' available," said Andy; "bit if they shud' hae tae tak' a bit length aff a plank, it's no' a big metter."

Even in the face of death, people did not overlook the practising of thrift.

Mrs. Semple passed away during the night, and Andy hardly recognised himself as he stepped about next day in his second best clothes and with polished boots—farm work being, of necessity, suspended.

Towards noon, he sauntered up as far as Timothy Sloane's, whose eldest son was wearing near the end, with decline.

"Hoo's the boy the day, Teemothy?"

"Vera low, Andy—sinkin' awa' fast."

"Wull 'e be likely tae pit ower mair nor a day or twa?"

"The 'turn o' the nicht' 'll likely bring a change. . . . We hear the Mistress hes got awa'."

"She gaed aff last nicht, an' a' wus thinkin' o' askin' Rabin Riggs tae appin' a grave; an' if ye thocht the boy's wud' sune be required, we micht es weel join an' engage Rabin fur a half day."

"Thir' can be little risk," said Timothy, "even shud' it no' be wanted fur a day or twa; the wather bin' dry, the grave can tak' little herm."

Andy was feeling utterly lonely and desolate; Timothy's heart was just breaking about his beloved son; and yet a stranger, to have overheard the two thus economically arranging matters, would have been unable to detect the least semblance of grief in either.

During the wake, neighbours and friends would drop in, and the talk would be about land, labour, or the price of produce and stock. When the time for the funeral service arrived, the husband or father would join heroically in the singing of a portion of the 103rd Psalm to the tune of "Coleshill"; the interment

would take place, and friends move slowly away from the newly-made grave—no weeping—no demonstration; but "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its grief."

Nowadays, when the doctor shakes his head and announces that a patient has passed beyond hope of recovery, the fact is, at least for a time, carefully withheld from the sufferer; but when Mrs. Semple's doom was confided to Andy, he acquainted her with the fact there and then—she receiving the same with as much composure as if it were only the matter of another cow or sheep being added to the farm stock.

"If it's the Almichty's wull, a'm ready at ony time He may see fit.

"Ye'll be left lanely, Andy, ma man: bit it'll only be fur a wee while: at ye'r age ye canna' expeck tae be lang ahin' me."

"Wud' ye like me to step ower fur Rosey M'Cartney?" said Andy.

"Bliss's a', man, can a' no' dee 'athoot Rosey M'Cartney?"

"——or Mister M'Allister?"

"Dinna' bother the man; he's plenty tae dae, an's no' sae young es he hes bin hissel'.

"A'm no' bin' takin' at a shoort. Ma lamp hes bin filled, an' the week [wick] trimmed this mony a year, an' a'm ready fur the Bridegroom whun He chooses fur tae come."

Over twenty years ago, the said Mrs. Semple, not feeling herself in good health, and the local doctor acknowledging himself unable to diagnose her complaint, had consulted a specialist in the city, who discovered some affection of her heart, which he informed her might prove fatal at any moment, did she encounter any sudden shock or excitement.

A few weeks afterwards she was pitched from a cart, the horse having bolted; but, although severely shaken, and sustaining some bruises, nothing more serious intervened, and she was granted a peaceful death in her bed.

.

Sammie Logan's wife was thought to be on her deathbed at one time—"given up," in fact, and considered to be very low. Sammie was sitting by the bed-side when she remarked:

"Ye'll think lang, Sam, an' be bit puirly luck't after whun a'm awa', a' hae nae doot.

"Gin' a raisonable time hes elepsed, if ye can fa' in wi' some respectable, weel-daen, middle-aged wumman, ye micht dae waur nor

merry agen; fur folk's badly aff 'at ir' left tae the mercy o' strangers."

"'Deed, Dorothy, a' wus jist thinkin' o' somethin' o' that sort masel'," said Sammie; "an' it occurred tae me 'at George Frame's weeda michtna' be ill-wully tae venture on the merrit' state a second time. She's a weel-daen, sonsy, managin' wumman, an' weel spoken o' a' roon'."

Dorothy said little to this; but the "turn o' the nicht" brought about an improvement in her condition. In a week's time she was about again, and survived for another seven years—Sammie himself having passed away in the interval.



A MINISTER AND A MAN.



Chapter XVIII.

A MINISTER AND A MAN.

TO give an adequate, detailed account of Mr. M'Allister's career during the fifty odd years of his ministry in the village, would require a volume for itself: how he was instant in season and out of season; rejoicing with those who rejoiced, and condoling with such as were in grief; aiding, advising, exhorting, giving, lending, comforting—in short, the minister was looked upon as a very Father in Israel, not only by the members of his own flock, but by the whole neighbourhood in which he dwelt.

He had his reward, too, this godly man—even in this world. He truly loved his people, and was, in turn, loved by them.

He has been dead these many years; the

twig of willow planted at the head of his grave has spread out its arms, until it has, as it were, taken the whole of the little mound under its protection. The moss has crept up and over the headstone, until one has to press it aside to find out the date of his death. The house in which he dwelt is tenanted by another. The village which he loved so well, and in which his long and useful life was spent, knows him no more for ever; and yet, until the present day, the very mention of his name brings forth from those who remember him, and even from the children who don't, expressions of the warmest regard, and most tender memories.

Each one has something of his or her own to tell:—how he helped the starving and afflicted families during that terrible black year of the potato famine, or of his strenuous efforts in the following years to avert a repetition of the calamity, by the introduction of new seeds, more careful cultivation, and, above all, the more general exercise of thrift;—of how he had stood by the widow and orphan, the distressed and afflicted—the cry of the needy ever awaking a responsive echo in his heart.

Honest as the day, and unsuspicious, he expected from others the same qualities; and, it need hardly be added, was often disappointed. Of the loans which were never repaid, and the bills to which he lent his name, and which *were* paid—*by himself*—or of the many and various calls upon his slender purse, he never spoke: this, however, is known, that he came to the village comparatively rich, and died comparatively poor—very little of the wealth having been squandered on himself or his modest household.

There is here but an outline—faint and inadequate—of the life of this servant of God; let those who remember him, or have known something of a minister's duties and occupations in a country parish half a century ago, fill in the details for themselves. Time and space will only permit the relating of a very few incidents of that quiet life.

The minister had been a strong man in his best days: robust, athletic, and the possessor of a well-knit frame. The matter of walking the twenty-four odd miles to the city and back was looked upon by him as a feat of very small consequence—even when coupled with the carrying of various more or less weighty

parcels—always including a number of books from the libraries, which were packed in a green baize satchel.

As has been previously noted, there was an amount of determination behind his kindly bearing and gentle manners; and a temper lay hidden beyond his soft heart, which, on one or two occasions, blazed forth to an extent that surprised beholders.

A case of cruelty to animals, or of the strong oppressing the weak, would kindle the flame; while the robbing of a bird's nest was sufficient to bring forth his righteous indignation.

On one occasion, big Andy Gibson, journeyman blacksmith, and who, when in his cups, was a bit of a bully, had quarrelled with Joe Kernahan, the surface-man—"Tovey Joe" he was called, from the endless collection of tales and adventures he told—himself always the hero—tales which he told so often that people said he at last came to believe them himself.

Both the blacksmith and "Tovey Joe" had been drinking together for some days—off and on—and on this occasion quarrelled as to who possessed the better wife. The blacksmith wished to compel "Tovey" to admit that there was only one good and proper woman in the

world, and that he (the smith) possessed her. This "Tovey," in view of his own better half, was in no way disposed to do.

A blacksmith is an awkward personage to quarrel with; but "Tovey," once a few glasses of whiskey were inside, would have tackled Goliath. "Tovey's" physical powers were, unfortunately for himself on this occasion, weaker than his spiritual—or spirituous rather—and he was getting a bad mauling from the smith as Mr. M'Allister appeared on the scene.

It is related that big Andy, not content with knocking "Tovey" down as often as he arose, kicked him severely while on the ground, and it was this that raised the "lion" in the minister.

"You cowardly villain! how dare you act like that to a man when he is on the ground, and that man only half the size of yourself?"

"What's that tae you?" snarled the smith; "only fur ye'r black coat a'd think little o' p'yen' yersel' in the same coin."

"If it's only the coat," said the minister, "I'll take it off."

Big Andy stared as he saw the minister in his shirt sleeves, his eyes blazing with anger

and indignation, and rolling back his cuffs. It was no spindleshank of an arm that was revealed.

"A' wudna' hae ony luck if a' struck a meenister."

"Forget the minister!—he's laid aside for the present. It's a *man* you have to deal with now! Stand out and defend yourself!"

"A'll no' fecht," muttered the smith, growing visibly paler; his arms dropping by his sides.

"Then ask Joe Kernahan's pardon for the brutal manner in which you have treated him. If not, I'll give you a lesson which you will not soon forget—savage-hearted, cowardly villain that you are!—you should be hunted out of the village. Ask his pardon!"

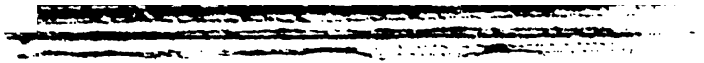
"A'm sorry, Joe, if a' hurted ye—a' wus aside masel' wi' drink."

"Now, go home and get sober, and ask God to give you a new heart. If you continue to act as you're doing, you'll soon reach a place where drink will be a scarce commodity, no matter how earnestly you may desire it.

"As for you, 'Tovey,'" continued the minister, drawing on his coat, "let this be a lesson to you to give over evil habits and bad company.

"Had not Providence directed me to your aid just now, your wife might have been a widow this night."

Thus did the minister gain the upper hand of big Andy, who fell into such low esteem that he was glad to quit the village, after a short while, and look out for pastures new.





THE "BLACK OAKS."



Chapter XIX.

THE "BLACK OAKS."

THE way in which Mr. M'Allister stopped the faction fights deserves honourable mention, and the circumstances were rather peculiar.

It was not by physical strength, as may be imagined, for he was getting to be an old man by this time; but there is an influence of the heart more powerful than that of the arm.

These faction fights, it is only just to say, were in no way connected with the villagers, who were most peaceably-disposed people since the bad influence of the Tumulty family and their *protégé*, "The Cadger," had departed from their midst, although it was the village street that too often became the battle-ground.

It was on fair days that hostilities broke out, and these had their origin in long-time feuds.

There were the wild hill men from Tildree, Ardnagranna, and Ballyscully districts, who delighted to test their strength against the lowland dwellers from such places as Templemurray, Ballyshilliday, and those districts through which the river flowed on its way to the lough beyond the county town.

Although these inhabitants of the valley considered themselves a long way further advanced in civilization than the hill country folk, there were amongst them families of great bodily strength and stature—such as the Donnigans, Sturgins, and M'Ilhinneys, who refused to bow the knee to the Gormans and Blackadders from the hills.

Big Neill Gorman was the chieftain of the hill tribes, and Dan Donnigan captained the lowlanders. Each champion had a regular army of adherents and sympathizers, who attended the fairs quite prepared for a skirmish as soon as the business of the day had been got through and sufficient liquor imbibed to bring them into fair fighting form.

The men were equipped, not with shillelaghs or bludgeons — these were considered Popish weapons—but with good stout, well-seasoned, flexible, heavy-headed ash plants—"Black Oaks"

they were called—which were quite capable of doing telling work when properly handled by experienced men.

The signal for war was not given in the Southern who'll-tread-on-the-tail-of-my-coat fashion, but Neill Gorman would flourish his plant in Dan Donnigan's face, inviting him to test the matter another time as to who was the better man.

The watchword spread with lightning rapidity. There was a wild stampede, a hasty mustering of the clans, and in less time than it takes to recount it, the, at other times, quiet village street had become a scene of the wildest disorder.

Looking down on the Fair Hill, from the vicinity of the upper pump, a hundred ash sticks could be seen doing nasty work. Men were being dragged out from the thick of the fight whose features were hardly discernible through blood and bruises. Curses and fiendish yells rent the air, and, above all, were the screams of the women in their wild efforts to save loved ones, or, it must be confessed, in some cases, to urge on the combatants.

The street became a real pandemonium, the battle often lasting for hours, until the

weaker side were crushed to the wall, or forced to retreat.

Schoolboys would rehearse the scenes during the intervening months, the party feeling being little less bitter. "Are you a Donnigan or a Gorman?" was the great important question.

There was one man who was ever to be seen in the very thickest of the fray—the minister. Entreating, commanding, coaxing—even threatening—he did his utmost to quell the tumult, but, too often, with but feeble measure of success.

The sight of the venerable man, during his latter years, moving about in the very centre of the fight—his long hair, white as wool, flowing over his neck and shoulders; his countenance, expressive of the most intense pain and consternation—was pathetic in the extreme, reminding one of a sheep, pure and spotless, amid a pack of ravening wolves.

On the afternoon of a certain May fair day the fight had begun as usual, and was proceeding with all the hellish force and vigour common to such occasions. The minister was on the scene, using his every effort to abate the disturbance.

His hat had got knocked off and trampled under foot; but, bare-headed, his long hair

flowing in the breeze, he was actively striving to make peace between the opposing forces.

Stepping between two combatants, a tremendous blow from the knotty head of an ash plant, which was meant for one of them, missed its mark, struck the minister fair on the forehead, felling him to the ground.

The suddenness of the accident, coupled with the brutality which had been its cause, sent consternation into the hearts of even those savage rowdies. A truce was proclaimed, both parties seemingly appalled at the sight of the old minister lying helpless on the ground.

It was big Dan Donnigan himself who stepped up to the Gorman champion from the hills, with this remark:

"Len's a han', Gorman, tae carry the meenister hame. We ir' the twa 'at begun the fecht; only fur whuch this calamity wudna' a happen't."

"Ye'r aboot richt there, Donnigan, an' a' only hope we'll no' be accoontable fur the guid man's life."

"Ca' twa frae ye'r side," answered Donnigan, "an' a'll dae the same frae mine, an' we'll carry 'im es easy as if he wus on a streetcher."

The minister was accordingly lifted, as gently as a baby asleep, and carried down the street by these six stalwart men, joining their hands under the man of God—hands which, five minutes before, had been uplifted against each other in deadly strife.

The crowd, composed of both factionists, inhabitants of the village, and peaceably-disposed visitors to the fair, followed in mute procession. Altogether it was a touching spectacle.

When half way down the street, Mr. M'Allister partly regained consciousness, opened his eyes for a moment, and asked, in a faint voice, not to be carried home, for fear of alarming his wife. He was, accordingly, taken to Johnnie Glenn's, where a bed was prepared with all haste, the doctor arriving immediately.

When the wound had been examined and dressed, it was found that no great harm had been done, saving a severe shock to the system; and, indeed, there seemed no reason why the patient might not go to the manse later in the evening.

Bad news travels fast. Almost as soon as the patient had been carried into the hotel, Mrs. M'Allister was by his side, having heard of the calamity which had befallen her husband.

Her pale face and half-distracted look might have helped to drive home the lesson to the hearts of the crowd that were gathered about the door.

Anxiously they waited; both sides communing together on the unfortunate occurrence which had laid the good man low.

The doctor was besieged with inquiries on his coming out from the patient, but that worthy man, justly indignant, flatly refused to disclose any information—merely reminding the rioters that if the minister died, his blood would for ever lie at their doors.

It was after three hours thus spent in hanging about the vicinity of the hotel that the door opened, and, to the intense joy of the crowd, Mr. M'Allister himself appeared, his head bandaged, and leaning on the arm of his wife.

It was not exactly a cheer that broke from the assembled multitude—they were too repentant and humble by this time for that—but a low murmur of satisfaction went round—the outcome of feelings intensely relieved.

The old minister, uncovering his head (Johnnie had lent him a hat), addressed the people in these words:

"My dear friends, I am thankful to say the accident I met with to-day has not proved to be of so serious a nature as was at first feared. [Cheers.] I have been informed that the regrettable incident was the means of bringing the fight to an end; and that fact brings to my heart so much joy, that any little pain I may have suffered is of very small consequence in comparison. [Cheers.]

"Believe me, my dear friends, I would willingly endure not only bodily pain, but the loss of life itself, to bring about friendly feelings between the two opposing parties, who have had hitherto so much unseemly, profitless, and painful wrangling.

"I cannot say as much as I would wish—feeling—not—quite—strong—yet—you see, I am not just so young as I have been; but if both sides would only give me a promise that for the future they will endeavour to cherish towards each other more forbearance, toleration, and kindly feelings, I, for my part, will not only consider the wound I have received as a blessing in disguise, but will return home a happy man, pray for you all, as I never cease to do, and thank the Almighty that He has been pleased to use me as a means of bringing peace

and security to many families and homes throughout the country." (Great cheering, and cries of "We will! we will!")

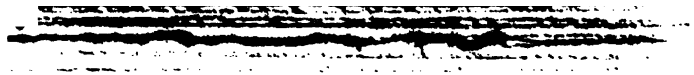
"Good-night, then, my friends; go in peace to your homes, and may God bless you all and yours." (Cries of "Chair him! chair him!")

There was a rush of both factionists as to which would get hold of the minister first.

The worthy man was carried in triumph to the manse, followed by the crowd, and set down safely at his own door.

Thus ended the faction fights. The evening preceding the following May fair day a huge bonfire was lit on the highest summit of the Tildree hills, and another burned red against the sky from the heights above Tullymurray. These were the signals of peace, which has been maintained up to the present day.

Mr. M'Allister was confined to the house for some weeks—not so much on account of the wound, as owing to the shock which his system had received. The manse was besieged by inquiries from all sides, great anxiety prevailing until the time when the old minister was able to resume his duties—going in and out amongst his flock, like the faithful shepherd that he was.





TWO LITTLE GREEN GRAVES.



Chapter XX.

TWO LITTLE GREEN GRAVES.

THEY were not always cripples, these experienced sufferers lying on the same bed. Our remotest recollection of them is having seen Peg Cupples perched far up among the branches of a rowan tree, swinging and swaying gleefully, making the scarlet-covered branches bend and shake with great force; and of Bill, two years older, pale complexion, and earnest dark eyes, who fought his elder brother's battles at school, at times facing a bully twice his size.

Peg was "hands and feet" to her mother. At the age of seven she had come to look upon her parent as an old woman, almost ready for retirement, judging by the manner in which she tried to keep her in bed in the mornings — taking her a cup of tea, and

commanding her to keep out of the way until she had got the breakfast over, dishes washed, and things in general tidied up for the day.

Bill's tastes lay more in the direction of learning. He was one of those referred to by "Fractions" as possessing a "heid." The friendship between master and pupil came near to receiving a temporary check on a certain day on which Bill set the master right anent a question in mensuration.

"Fractions" covered his defeat by repeating to the school, word for word, the whole of the fifth proposition of Euclid's second book, which so fascinated and overawed us, that Bill's triumph sank low in comparison.

"Fractions," while on his high horse, reminded us of what we had often heard before—that, though content to spend his time among a common squad of farmers' and tradesmen's children, he was a "first-of-first" man; had been highly commended for his superior answering at the National Board examinations in Dublin; and that his pension would be almost double that of any of the common schoolmasters around.

There was silence in the school for almost ten minutes after hearing this statement. The

idea of our master's being a "first-of-first" ("A1 at Lloyd's" had not been heard of in the village at this time), and of his having been under examiners in Dublin, raised him very high, indeed, in our estimation. We "clodded" with additional force the scholars coming from the common schools during that afternoon, so proud were we of the master's attainments, which, to our minds, covered a multitude of eccentricities.

That fell disease which has cast a gloom over so many homes in the village and neighbourhood laid hold of Peg and Bill — their constitutions never very robust—almost at the same time. They struggled bravely for a while, feeling themselves one day almost well, and the next correspondingly weak and languid, until, at last, the two were put to bed—Peg was eight and Bill nearly ten—never to rise again.

Peg accepted her fate uncomplainingly—women have so much more patience under suffering than men—but Bill for long cherished the hope of being about again. His clothes hung at the head of the bed for months. For convenience' sake, and to make it more cheerful for the sufferers, the bed was placed in a corner of the large farm kitchen, and both

patients laid therein—the one at the head, the other at the foot.

It was thus that a hard-working woman resignedly took up her cross, and found her abilities, at times, fully taxed. Not that the sufferers were over-exacting, or their requirements manifold, but a lingering confinement to bed entails much; and, besides, there were the cows to be milked, the dairy work to be done, and the never-ending duties of a farm-house to be looked after.

Behold this woman, never having an idle moment from five o'clock in the morning till ten at night. Work, work, work, and, not only that, but her sleep often disturbed twice or thrice during the night; and yet she ever rose without a grumble, went through every duty with cheerfulness, though all the while a burden, heavy as lead, lay on her heart.

True, she was saved from many of the worries which town-bred dames must endure. She was mistress of her own house, being under the rule of no servant: that was a comfort. She had no time for parties, morning calls, or "afternoons," and was thus saved from much perplexing formalism, profitless gossip, and "white lies." At the same time, many, while not

courting her lot, might have almost envied her perfect health, the uniformity and whiteness of her teeth, and the roses of her comely cheeks, so well set off by the snowy-white cap, tied by broad muslin bands under her chin.

Besides, this woman received much inspiration, at times, from both ends of the sick-bed—much useful advice and comfort.

Peg possessed a little money, and, what is rather rare nowadays, wished to see it put to useful purposes during her lifetime. She bribed and rewarded the younger children (Johnnie among the rest) into the doing of such things as carrying water and coals, going messages, or keeping out of the way at the right time, which meant the pleasant half-hour immediately following the early dinner, in which nurse and patients would settle down to a quiet chat over a cup of tea.

Peg well knew the value of money, for she made hers hard. Often her hen took long holidays from laying, and sometimes prices were so low that such a thing as profit was almost out of the question.

Bill was the owner of three gooseberry bushes, from which he could generally calculate on a fair return (no one ever stole from Bill's

bushes); still, it took him a long time to make up the half-sovereign, lent out at interest to a near relative. A shilling on the morning of each May and November fair day was what he had held out for, and, although on his death-bed, he could never be brought to see the enormity of the extortion which he was practising.

If Bill was less liberal during his lifetime than Peg, it was, no doubt, with the commendable object of leaving his mother comfortably provided for at his death. She inherited the half-sovereign, with interest accrued thereon, together with all his other belongings stored in the starch-box, excepting a bead purse of his own making and his Bible, which he bequeathed to other members of the family.

Much spiritual comfort also came to the tired mother from the sick-bed. She was often cheered, and went about her work refreshed, by these words of encouragement and counsel—the fruits of matured experience:

"These losses an' crosses, mother, mun' a' be sent fur some usefu' purpose.

"It's richt 'at we shud' sit lichtly tae the worl', whuch is no' meant tae be oor rest, bit a sort o' school fur preparin' us fur the nixt.

"Bill an' me were jest talkin' last nicht, after ye wor' a' in bed—a' coodna' sleep on accoont o' the sore in ma loin, an' Bill kep' awak' fur company—an' we wur' comparin' oor twa-three days' sufferin' wi' what the Saviour endured—or even what Paul an' Peter cam' through; an' we imagined Paul in that inner prison—maybe amang rats an' mice, an' no' able tae pit oot ether han' or fit tae fear them awa'.

"We dae suffer pain, an' we'r weary mony a time o' the lang lie; an' we wud' like tae get oot agen an' see the fields an' the floors an' the sun shinin'; bit hae we no' a comfortable hame—what mony hae no'—an' iverything we need? an', better nor a', you tae nurse us; an' hesna' God bin vera guid?

"Then, it'll no' be lang, mother" (this during the week before Peg went home) "till we a' meet agen. It may seem lang, bit it'll no' be.

". . . . Deein' canna' be hard, mother, when God gies us the victory.

". . . . A'm no' 'feared o' the river, fur a' ken He'll carry me, like Christian, safe tae the ither side, an' Bill 'll sune follow, an' you an' the ithers; an' Bill an' me 'll be watchin' fur you at the gates."

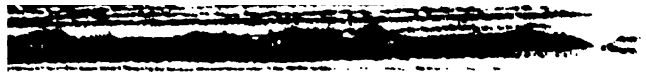
Do not think the poor mother swooned and had to be borne unconscious from the bedside on that Friday morning at four o'clock when Peg's tired little spirit took its flight, or that Bill went off too from shock when the little, wasted, worn-out form was gently carried from the bed to another in the back room. It is only among society people such things occur—people with *nerves*. This mother's heart was breaking, her crushed spirit crying wildly, almost rebelliously; but the work must go on, and only she could do it.

As for Bill—was it not for this that he had been preparing himself for long? and, if his faith meant anything, now was the time for its exercise. His calm resignation, advice, and comforting words, were really an inspiration—affecting everyone around. Besides, Peg's death was a warning that his own time was fast approaching.

When that time did come, and just before Bill closed his eyes on the world, from which he had inherited much suffering and learned much wisdom, to his mother he was enabled to reveal one or two things from the Borderland, about which she talked little, but the possession of which brought her more comfort than the fact of finding herself Bill's principal legatee.



AT JESUS' FEET.



Chapter XXI.

AT JESUS' FEET.

SO the bed, its purpose having been fulfilled, was taken down, and removed from the kitchen.

Change of air and scene, agreeable tonics, and a moderate share of amusement, are said to be availing remedies for the heart bowed down with grief. Hard work, constantly applied, has been known to meet the end also.

This woman had been heard to say, that only for heavenly grace, combined with the multitudinous duties which had to be attended to, she must have broken down under the reaction following the hard strain of nursing and anxiety.

She did have a change to the seaside for a week, after the hay was saved, and before the commencement of harvest; but it was to the place

where the children had been sent before their strength gave out; and the associations opened the heart-wounds afresh. There was the memory of the bathing and poulticing; the stile overlooking the beach, where the two little figures had sat, and which came in sight after the rounding of a certain corner; and how their faces had beamed with gladness at her approach. And there were the long, lonely night watches, and—and—it was little wonder the woman was glad to get home and to her work again.

There were still others requiring her care: that was one comfort. Her darlings were safe, free from pain and suffering, in their Father's house: that was another.

In time she grew almost like her wonted self again, except her eyes—they were none the less bright, but had received that saddened, chastened, far-away look — we all know it — which we see every day on the countenances of those who have "sown in tears."

The face was still comely, cheeks rosy, bordered by the snowy-white cap, with strings. It was a face ripened by the suns and storms of life.

It had conquered—had overcome. The heart-rending struggles, the long nights' passionate

weeping (the whole household asleep but herself)—"Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted." But this Rachel was comforted. The Shepherd who had taken the lambs to His bosom was not indifferent to the mother's grief. Peace came at last, and abode. It was thus that the face became sweet. The stamp of the new kingdom was upon it.

She became cheerful again—sometimes even merry. How much she relished a joke, and how heartily she could laugh! New jokes gave her a momentary pleasure; but it was the old, tried, well-seasoned, and tested ones on which she browsed, often rippling over with quiet amusement at the same comic incidents which had yielded her pleasure for half a century.

Of poetry she had always been fond. She used to sing "in her young days"—(thus leaving an opening for a compliment). Music was beautiful, but poetry was *grand*. Sir Walter was her favourite among the poets. She never read novels, on principle—might, by a time, dip into one, read a passage here and there, and then see how it ended—excepting Harriet Beecher Stowe's works, which carried her away by storm.

Often her voice was heard on a summer afternoon, repeating snatches of her favourite poetry while standing at the bake-board, the wash-tub, or even seated low at the side of her favourite cow, and it would be:

"Where shall the traitor rest—
He the deceiver,
Who could win maiden's breast,
Ruin, and leave her?"

From this she would go back a few stanzas, and we would hear:

"Is there none
Of all my halls have nurst,
Page, squire, or groom, one cup to bring
Of blessed water from the spring
To slake my dying thirst?"

The milk would now be coming in short, sharp strands, and she would only have time for—

"In the lost battle, borne down by the flying,
Where mingles war's rattle with groans of the dying—
so the notes rang."

She would take up her pail and stool, and make her way housewards—the patient cow looking after her with regret.

Mr. M'Allister, in his younger days, was fond of recitation, and a favourite of his had

been "The Old Arm Chair." The piece had taken a firm hold of her imagination. She often lightened the labour of a whole afternoon by repeating to herself the well-known lines:

> "And I learned how much the heart could bear,
> When I saw her die in that old arm chair."

They miss much who lack the sweet companionship of poetry and song.

Then this woman was not without her outside joys. She had her flowers—tulips, and carnations, and fuchias, and moss roses—old-fashioned, pale-pink roses, with real moss clustering around their leaves. Dearly she loved them all, although it was always a sprig of southernwood which she took to "meeting" with her on Sabbath days—the quietness of colour, perhaps, best suited the day, or it may have been that the perfume blended well with that of the peppermint drops.

She had her weakness too—what woman hasn't? She never thought there was woman good enough for her sons, or who would look after their comforts as she had done.

It was hard to get her to confess to being an out-and-out fortune-hunter; but she would often declare to Johnnie: "They'r jest as guid 'at

hae money as they 'at hae nane—an' no' a hair harder tae leeve wi'."

To her mind there were no songs of later days in any way to be compared to those early favourites, such as "Beautiful Star," "The Minstrel Boy," "The Better Land" (not Cowen's arrangement). On one or two occasions she had heard "The Moravian Nun's Hymn" and "What are the Wild Waves Saying?" and thought them exquisite—the words almost came up to Sir Walter.

On the rare occasions in which she travelled by rail, she always made a point of arriving at the station half an hour too soon. Those who ran themselves to within ten or twelve minutes of time of starting, she thought, deserved to be left behind.

She tried her best to appear comfortable whilst the train was in motion, making a pretence of admiring the surrounding scenery, but it was noticed that her lips were parched, and that she kept herself firm against the back of the seat when the speed increased. She never gained confidence in brakes.

One thing this woman hardly ever did—read her Bible. Many an earnest Manchurian native could have shown her an example in that

respect. She must have been either a wonderful student in her young days or the possessor of a powerful memory, for she seemed to have the greater part of the Bible by heart. Give her the kernel of a passage, and she would put it in shape, as well as tell where it was to be found. Repeat a text, and she would come very near to the chapter and verse where it occurs, as well as relate when she had last heard a sermon on same, also the heads and divisions. As for the psalms—but she was fond of poetry of all kinds.

Even on her death-bed she had no wish to hear the Bible read. She seemed to dwell on her favourite passages, taking them in turn. They had been life-long, well-tried comforters these, and were quite fit to sustain her at the last.

"No, a' hae nae fear," she said to George a short time before the end. "A'm jest waitin' tae cast mysel' at Jesus' feet."

. . . . "At Jesus' feet," she murmured faintly "Jesus' feet."

In the auld meetin'-hoose green she was laid to rest, close to her darlings who had gone before. George, her faithful partner in joy and sorrow, did not long survive her, and the two

little green graves were opened for the reception of his mortal remains. John Cupples, now the active minister of a city charge, finds time to make an occasional pilgrimage to the quiet old graveyard, where he spends a profitable half hour beside the resting-place of his loved ones, and, at least once a year, he preaches from the text :

"*At Jesus' Feet.*"

THE END.

Press Notices.

"When Lint was in the Bell."

BY

ARCHIBALD M'ILROY.

British Weekly.—We have read with much interest these graceful and humorous sketches of village life in Ulster. They are the work of a close and original observer, of a writer who sips at no glass but his own. There are many delightful characters, and the book, as a whole, leaves a sweet and pleasant impression on the mind. We hope Mr. M'Ilroy will follow it up with other pictures of old days and old customs in the North of Ireland.

The Manchester Guardian.—Mr. Archibald M'Ilroy, in a series of unpretending chapters, has given us a very faithful picture of rural manners in an Ulster village some forty or fifty years ago.

Newcastle Daily Leader.—Mr. M'Ilroy is never uninteresting; and, in two or three of his sketches, such as the one in which he tells of the conversion of Jamie Miskimmon, the Calvinist, or that which describes the idiosyncrasies of "the quaint pastor of a quaint congregation," or those in which the love difficulties of Davy Bewhunnan are set forth, he gives evidence of considerable insight into character, and of a true appreciation of the thoughts and feelings of the generation of villagers that has passed away.

PRESS NOTICES.

North British Daily Mail.—In this ably-written little book Mr. M'Ilroy has done for the North of Ireland what Maclaren and Barrie have done for Forfarshire and Perthshire—embalmed as it were in his sketches the rural life of an Ulster village—a life that is now passing away, if it be not already gone. We shall certainly look forward to any further contributions from Mr. M'Ilroy's pen on the subject of Ulster with the keenest expectation.

Glasgow Weekly Herald.—The contents of the book are of the kail-yard order, and give sketches of the characters who are to be met with in an old-fashioned Scoto-Irish village. We read with interest of the dominie, the pastor, and the precentor, and their personalities are sketched with a kindly humour. The book has interest for Scots, for most of the characters introduced have a strong touch of the Scottish dialect on their tongues. The volume is daintily printed on good paper, and with liberal margin.

Glasgow Evening Citizen.—"When Lint was in the Bell" is an Irish book of the kail-yard description. The scene is laid in an Ulster village, and the author, Mr. Archibald M'Ilroy, gives in a series of sketches an interesting and entertaining account of the inhabitants and their modes of life and thought. While several of these are reminiscent of the kail-yard, with which we are already so familiar, they will be perused with pleasure by many who are acquainted with the district described. The publishers are M'Caw, Stevenson & Orr, Ltd., Belfast.

The Leeds Mercury.—It reminds one very much of Dean Ramsey's Reminiscences with its droll humour and old-world characters. There is always something at the back of all the strange stories Mr. M'Ilroy relates. The book has chiefly to do with country life, and his village portraits are real, if somewhat antiquated. They have, perhaps, been chosen on that very account. He describes a typical village and the obvious factions to be found therein. In your large towns you have other things to think of than the affairs of your next-door neighbour; but in a village all one's doings are public property, and are open to criticism. Suffice to say that at every turn we are met with something quite irresistible, and a more delightful book we have seldom met.

PRESS NOTICES.

The Cork Constitution.—"When Lint was in the Bell" falls between two stools of nationality. It is neither strongly Scotch nor altogether Irish, but, of the two, it leans towards the former. This to the Southerner is unsatisfactory, but to one who hails from the North of Ireland, where the Milesian blood is of such a diluted character, it will have a greater charm from describing familiar types of persons and places.

The Irish Presbyterian.—A very kindly spirit and much shrewd observation are exhibited in these twelve interesting chapters, and many of the incidents related are highly amusing. As the work of an Ulsterman, from whom we hope to hear again, we heartily recommend this volume, which is beautifully printed and dressed by the famous Belfast firm of M'Caw, Stevenson & Orr, Ltd.

Northern Whig.—Mr. Archibald M'Ilroy has done well, or more than well, in the sketches of Ulster life given in the tasteful volume "When Lint was in the Bell." Here he has with skill and judgment re-created, as it were, a sleepy old Ulster country village of some half-century ago, which has in the intervening period become a brisk market town, with numerous "public institutions," a double railway service, and the other indications of progress. It is a glimpse, and on the whole a fascinating glimpse, into the quiet country life of the Ulster Scot, well calculated to quicken the interest in and the respect for the sturdy race he represents. If Mr. M'Ilroy has a keen eye and a retentive memory, he has also an obvious and very kindly regard for those who lend life to his picture of a past generation.

The Belfast Evening Telegraph.—Mr. M'Ilroy dedicates the book to his wife. He has proved himself capable of doing for his own district in the North of Ireland what "Mac" is so well accomplishing for "Dhroll Donegal," and it is to be hoped he will not rest content with the success attained in his first effort. The printing has been entrusted to the local firm of M'Caw, Stevenson & Orr, Ltd., and the result has been in the highest degree satisfactory.

PRESS NOTICES.

The Witness.—We might go through all the sketches with pleasure to ourselves and our readers, but in justice to the writer we refrain. In a word, the book is a thorough bit of work of its class, one that cannot be read apart from sweet memories of tales and times that are almost traditional. It is very neatly printed, and is published by M'Caw, Stevenson & Orr, Ltd., Belfast.

Larne Weekly Telegraph.—Mr. Archibald M'Ilroy has here presented us with an interesting picture of Irish village life some fifty years ago. The work is full of interest, and the publishers (Messrs. M'Caw, Stevenson & Orr, Ltd.) must be complimented on the very excellent style, both as regards printing and paper, in which the book is produced.

The Ballymena Observer.—A very interesting series of sketches of Ulster village life as it existed perhaps fifty years ago, and which have been contributed by Mr. Archibald M'Ilroy, and very tastefully brought out in a half-crown volume by Messrs. M'Caw, Stevenson & Orr, Ltd., Belfast. Scotch writers lately have done much to familiarize their readers with the glens and villages of Scotland, and in the volume before us Mr. M'Ilroy has brought before us a number of characters that any who know Ulster country life will at once recognise as "family portraits." There is a great deal of Ulster-Scot humour in these sketches, and some very touching and pathetic incidents. They are written by one who is evidently "in the know," and are a very faithful portrayal of village life and times of half a century ago.

Newtownards Chronicle.—They are simple, unassuming tales, and will be read with interest by those who do not look for deep plots and thrilling situations. Messrs. M'Caw, Stevenson & Orr, Ltd., Belfast, have produced the book in high-class style, equal to the best London houses.

Newry and Belfast Standard.—The form and make-up of this attractive volume of 137 pages will add to the reputation of the Belfast publishers, of whom all Ireland may be proud for a progress which has made them successful competitors with the great metropolitan circles. The hand of the author will evidently wield an influence of no inferior importance in its future records.




Stanford University Libraries
3 6105 020 315 458

STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
CECIL H. GREEN LIBRARY
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-6004
(415) 723-1493

All books may be recalled after 7 days

DATE DUE